

**A Master
Plan
for
Downtown
Rockport
2011**

Attributions

Prepared by the Rockport Planning Board 2010-2011

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Executive Summary – Downtown Master Plan

Rockport is a town with some extraordinary assets: the natural and built environment and people who are very invested in the community. Planning Boards often feel an important part of their responsibility is long-range planning, but they seldom have the time to do it. In 2009, as the national economy took a downturn, slowing local development, Rockport's Planning Board saw an opportunity to begin preparation of a Master Plan for the town. The area of greatest concentration of Rockport's assets—people, architecture, and nature—was chosen as the logical place to begin. That place is the center of Rockport, Downtown; initial focus was placed on the development of a Downtown Master Plan. The purpose of this Downtown Master Plan is to fully identify the assets, to identify changes and challenges that affect the assets, and to develop recommendations that will result in a better downtown, and thereby a better town for its residents.

Narrative on page 3 identifies earlier plans already undertaken that have been incorporated into this Downtown Master Plan. It is the intention of the Planning Board to continue the planning process by rolling these reports and the newly completed Downtown Master Plan into a town-wide Master Plan.

The Downtown is considered in three sub-areas—the MBTA Station Area, Bearskin Neck, and the Historic Commercial/General Zone. Each of these sub-areas has a distinct character but together they constitute the Downtown.

A summary of Census data and other available data for the overall Downtown, shows:

- Population town-wide declined between 2000 and 2010,
- A large percent of the population downtown is over the age of 65 (28%), is female (58%), and is white (97%),

- 80% of the buildings were constructed more than 50 years ago,
- Downtown holds many of the retail and commercial, home office, government, and fisheries employment found in town, and
- Buildings owned by municipal government and non-profit groups are important parts of downtown life.

In short, Downtown is the heart of Rockport's public, economic, and cultural life.

The planning process to develop this Plan consisted of a series of meetings with public presentations and audience participation, and three meetings with specific topics designed to collect the perceptions and needs of residents and users of the Downtown. The process also included several meetings with the Zoning Board of Appeals to hear their experience with problems and opportunities.

From these discussions the Planning Board determined it would be extremely important for the Plan's recommendations and next steps to be very explicit. The last sections of the Downtown Master Plan, therefore, include a detailed, topic-by-topic explanation of recommendations, followed by a summary table of action items with suggestions for responsibility and timing of implementation. It is intended that these action items be parceled out to specific parties for review and implementation.

During the development of the Downtown Master Plan, the Town had the opportunity to work with staff of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on important zoning changes for the existing General Zone downtown. While Rockport was not yet in the implementation phase for such changes, it was too good an opportunity to pass up. As a result of this work, the Planning Board is taking an extensive set of recommended zoning changes in the Downtown to Town Meeting in September

2011. These recommendations can be found on the Planning Board web page.

Rockport's Planning Board reviewed the information collected for development of the Downtown Master Plan, combined it with the opinions expressed in many meetings, and began to assemble a Vision for Downtown Rockport. The last public meeting in May 2011 further solicited elements of "Vision 2030" for Rockport. The Vision is included in this Plan, following the Executive Summary.

The initial hard work has been completed—the Downtown Master Plan has been prepared and

published! The Implementation section makes it clear that there are still significant efforts ahead. The Planning Board members will be meeting with Town Boards and Committees to encourage each organization to take a role in implementing the Plan. The Board will also seek a source of funds to develop a master plan for the entire town, built around this initial work undertaken for the Downtown. The Planning Board also plans to select portions of the Downtown Master Plan for translation into new zoning. Portions will be the base for other planning projects in future years as the Board leads the Town's effort to move the many recommendations into important new opportunities for Rockport.



Rockport Harbor



Visitor information booth at Barletta Park

A Vision for Rockport – 2030

From our 2011 vantage point, what is our Vision for Rockport 20 years from now, in 2030?

Historic, cultural, natural environment

In 2030, Rockport will continue to be a time capsule of a well-preserved 19th century New England coastal town. At the same time, the Town will be a lively, up-to-date, economically viable community. It will be a place of rich diversity—a place that promotes the visual and performing arts, protects the beauty and physical integrity of the environment, honors architectural features that span over three centuries, provides access to the Town’s amenities for residents of all economic means, and offers hospitality to visitors.

Economic

In 2030, Rockport will have a thriving, year-round economy that can sustain a variety of small businesses, as well as continue the tradition of providing a nurturing community for artists and artisans. There will be amenities for residents and visitors such as shops, restaurants, and recreational activities compatible with the seaside environment and its unique ecology and wildlife. Non-profit organizations will continue to be welcomed and will thrive, offering residents a lively social and cultural life with numerous opportunities for volunteerism.

The economy will be supported by a real estate market that offers a range of housing choices. The town will offer incentive programs for locating and investing in businesses and there will be support for business service needs, employment opportunities, and promotional efforts to attract investors. The “parking problem” will be a thing of the past.

Tourism

In 2030, a system of attractive interpretive signs will tell the story of Rockport’s history and allow all to deepen their appreciation of the built and natural features of the Downtown. Wayfinding signs will guide visitors to their destinations, reducing travel-stress and alleviating visitor/resident conflict. Locally owned Bed and Breakfast accommodations will continue to offer a unique travel experience for visitors seeking the quaint charm of an earlier era.

Government and Infrastructure

By 2030, Rockport has made key improvements in zoning and land-use controls with the result that difficult issues such as parking, renovations to historic buildings, and integration of residential and business activities are functioning smoothly. The appearance of the streets has benefited from coordinated design of street features, full-cutoff lighting, and underground utilities.

Sense of Community

In 2030, Rockport continues to be a town that offers a safe environment for people of all ages. Children can explore the downtown and enjoy parks and hiking trails with their families. Seniors can maintain their independence by living in close proximity to shopping, cultural activities, and an active senior center. Rockport continues to be a “great little place with a huge heart.”

Preparing a Master Plan for Downtown Rockport

Visions and Goals from Previous Planning Efforts

Over recent years, the Town has engaged in several planning activities that affect planning for the Downtown area. These plans include:

1. 2002 Rockport Municipal Harbor Plan
2. 2004 Rockport Community Development Plan
3. 2004 Bearskin Neck Planning Study
4. 2005 Rockport Reconnaissance Report – Essex County Historic Landscape Inventory
5. 2007 MBTA Station Area Plan
6. 2010 Rockport Hazard Mitigation Plan – Draft

The following is an abbreviated list of visions, assets, and goals for the Downtown identified in these previous plans.

- Rockport's harbors and waterfront are the defining assets of the community and central to its history, economy, image, and quality of life. "...increase and enhance access to the harbor for commercial and recreational purposes, protect the quality of the harbors' resources, and preserve the scenic and historical elements of the harbors and adjacent land..."
- The Bearskin Neck Planning Study inquired about "things that are valued" about Bearskin Neck. Design Character: irregularity of building and street patterns; dense urban fabric; human scale. Streetscape: trees, design quality of public areas that invites pedestrians; presence of wild and indigenous flowers. Historic Character: Unique character based on fishing history; sense of history and ownership. Waterfront: views and access to the water; working harbor. Land Use: Mixed use with commercial and residential uses

within the same district and within the same building; availability of affordable housing. Access and Circulation: public access to the water's edge and around many buildings; the ability to walk out to the breakwater. Economic Activities: tourist destination on the Neck; Main Street serves both tourists and the local resident population.

- Community Development Plan Vision: balance the need for economic development that serves both residential and non-residential uses with the preservation of key natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources.
- Rockport Reconnaissance Report: Many factors contribute to the unique character of Rockport's Downtown -- the compact scale, irregular pattern of narrow streets, idiosyncratic historic buildings on small lots and the mix of uses. However, what distinguishes it from most other Essex County communities is the close relationship to the working waterfront and the spectacular views of the harbor and the coastal headlands beyond. Preserving the diverse but fragile character of this area is both a personal priority for residents and an important economic strategy for the town.
- Participants in the development of the "Rockport Commuter Rail Station Area Concept Plans" imagined "a Rockport MBTA Station Area with a train station that has a warm place to wait, ...public restrooms, bike storage...the area around the train station is a mixed-used district with housing and offices above shops...a train station area that is welcoming and helpful to tourists, providing them with orientation and information regarding Rockport's sights, walking paths along the Mill Brook and trails to adjacent natural resources, with crosswalks and sidewalks with clear directions to the beaches

and the center of town...a train station area with traffic calming and efficiently laid out parking and a well-drained parking lot..."

and south, although these abutting neighborhoods are fairly similar to the downtown neighborhoods included in this study.

Downtown Rockport: Where We Are Now

For planning purposes, downtown Rockport can be characterized as three separate areas, with separate realms of significance. These are shown on Map 1.

DOWNTOWN ROCKPORT

Clearly the "heart" of the community, the area defined as Downtown includes much of the MBTA Station Area, the Intermediate Residential Zone, the Historic Commercial Center/General (G) Zone, and Bearskin Neck. The area is anchored by the row of largely commercial properties on the west side of Railroad Avenue (including the shopping center area and the MBTA station) and Sandy Bay on the east. This area contains the major portion of the town's retail stores and businesses, most of the area of four local historic districts, some primary tourist attractions, the center of the town's government, and most of the cultural and

MBTA STATION AREA

The MBTA Station area was the subject of a plan prepared in 2007 with a Smart Growth grant. That plan will be relied on for parts of this plan that addresses the same area. Recommendations from that report will be integrated with this plan. It is important to note that the MBTA area is distinctly different from most of the Downtown area. This area holds most of the "convenience" shopping for town residents, including hardware, dry-cleaning/laundry, pharmacy, convenience goods and some foods. The grocery store in this area closed in early 2011. While there is some older housing in the MBTA area, most commercial buildings were built within the last 50 years, with the exception of the Whistlestop Mall. Originally part of the former rail yard, the buildings are generally small and located in proximity so they can be accessed by walking. The area's design is not a particularly pedestrian friendly one. While there are some larger developments in the area, the housing is generally similar to that found in the historic downtown area.



Storefront in downtown

religious properties and institutions. It transitions to strictly residential neighborhoods on the north

HISTORIC COMMERCIAL/GENERAL ZONE

The Historic Commercial Center/General Zone is located around the waterfront area of the Downtown, and includes much of the four historic districts, as well as Bearskin Neck, the location for most retail that appeals to tourists, T-Wharf, and Front Beach. This area is characterized by two-to-three story buildings, wood frame construction with dormers and pitched roofs, and colors and materials traditionally used in coastal communities in New England. When zoning was adopted, this area was designated General Zone based on its history of retail businesses. Today, this zoning is inappropriate for the area and needs to

be changed. The use of this zoning category for such an important resource area suggests we look at it separately from the rest of the Downtown. Rockport can then determine proposed changes in the requirements of a new zone for the area, and any appropriate map changes.

BEARSKIN NECK

Downtown Rockport has many noteworthy features, including many churches, beaches, wharves — T, Lumber, and Old Harbor. Bearskin Neck (including Motif #1) is probably the most recognizable feature in Rockport. Bearskin Neck, included in the General Zone for zoning purposes, contains many former fish shacks and granite waterfront features that make the area both

unique and appealing and a primary attraction to tourists. Its current and future status is problematic, however, based on the abundance of adjoining wood-framed buildings and their potential susceptibility to fire, difficult access by vehicle for business and residential services, lack of parking, and presence in a Velocity Zone on the Federal Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), Map 4. This makes the area vulnerable to man-made and natural disasters (fire and flood) and subject to disinvestment. This area is, however, blessed with some of the most spectacular and pleasing views on the North Shore. As a result, it deserves special attention.



Bookstore in historic bank building



Historic interpretive marker

Characteristics of Rockport Downtown 2011

The Value of Rockport's Downtown

This baseline analysis will review housing and commercial uses in these three distinctly different geographical parts of town: ownership issues, zoning provisions, infrastructure, resources, public and cultural services, and recreation features. This information will provide a backdrop of the character and assets and liabilities that the Downtown Master Plan will use as its building blocks.

Rockport historically developed as two villages centered on harbors allowing commercial boating. The current Downtown area was originally named Sandy Bay and the harbor area north-west of downtown was named Pigeon Cove. When Rockport separated from Gloucester and incorporated in 1840, Sandy Bay became Rockport's Downtown. Pigeon Cove was incorporated into Rockport but maintains a somewhat separate identity. Pigeon Cove developed churches, retail stores, industrial activities, and a fire station. A granite breakwater was constructed to improve safety in the harbor and this area today remains an important center of commercial fishing activities in Rockport.

The Harbor Plan succinctly states the value of the Downtown to the entire community from its own perspective of harbor planning. "While not considered water-dependent in the strictest sense, tourism in Rockport is largely driven by its waterfront locale: it is the ocean environment, the boating opportunities, the active water-based industry of its past, and the scenic quality of the waterfront today that continue to interest and delight visitors to Rockport. In addition to tourism, the Town has managed to maintain a sufficiently large fishing fleet that contributes to both the

economy of the Town and to the continued success of tourism."

Rockport Downtown became the early center of the town's civic, religious, and commercial life. It remains that way today with only moderate changes to that dominance. The downtown commercial area, designated as the General Zone, originally developed to provide the convenience retail required by the local population—grocery stores, clothing stores, hardware supplies, fishing supplies, and more.

As the country's retail distribution systems changed, retail needs of the local population gradually moved over to the MBTA Station/Railroad Avenue areas. Still, most of this retail developed within about four blocks of the historic Downtown, clustered around the MBTA Station. Some retail also developed along Main Street going toward the Gloucester line. This area extended most recently with the construction of the Granite Savings Bank at the top of Great Hill.

The Historic Commercial/General Zone retains significant retail businesses of interest to local residents—clothing, bookstore, banks, restaurants, and other shops—but also has become the economic engine for attracting tourists. Much of its value is based on having retained enough historic buildings, unique landscape features (granite, water views, well-maintained yards), and quiet streets, to be attractive to tourists. It has more recently become attractive as a place to film movies. This is likely to continue if the Town maintains its historic, small-town charm.

Religious institutions have largely remained in the Downtown area. St. Joachim's Church merged with St. Ann's Church in Gloucester, but remains open for worship as Holy Family Parish. Other than that change, no new church has been constructed outside of the Downtown area.

Public institutions also largely remain in Downtown. Downtown is still the site of Town Hall, the Fire Station, the Library, the Post Office, and the Harbormaster's office. Only large departments have left Downtown—the Police Department and the Water and Street Departments of the Department of Public Works—and relocated a mile away to Great Hill. Private civic organizations, largely using public buildings, continue to meet in the Downtown. These include the Boy Scouts in Scout Hall, many arts and civic organizations in the Community House, and the VFW at Back Beach. The Rockport Art Association and Rockport Music own their own buildings in the Downtown area. Rockport Music is making a huge commitment to the Downtown area in the development of the Shalin Liu Performance Center on Main Street overlooking Sandy Bay.

Most importantly, the Downtown, with the exception of some of the MBTA area, retains much of its original design character—narrow, walkable streets; historic buildings and 19th century character; the working waterfront with granite harbor features; and many open areas where visitors can enjoy the views.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF ROCKPORT AND ITS DOWNTOWN

The population of Rockport changed little in the twenty years from 1980 to 2000, but in the period from 2000 to 2010, the population declined. The population in 2000, when the last Census was taken, was 7,767. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council had projected a population of 7,963 for Rockport in 2010. Early information from the 2010 U.S. Census shows a population of 6,952, or a decline of about 13%. Several causes for the population decline have been posited, such as an increase in ownership by week-end or seasonal visitors who are not counted as residents, and smaller household sizes. The only information released on the 2010 Census has been on population size and race for

use in redistricting. It is hard to speculate on the causes until further Census data is released. The other data recently released show Rockport as 97% white, and show a density of 2.16 people/household. The data also indicate that 23.9% of the housing units are considered vacant.

New housing construction has continued with development of more expensive single family homes—some on newly-created lots and some as teardowns of smaller homes. Only one of the new subdivisions approved in the last ten years has been built. The Lattof Lane subdivision has added 12 new homes, many of the units housing families that already lived in Rockport. None of the subdivisions are in the Downtown area, but some of the teardowns are in this area.

The Downtown area has seen little new residential development or improvements in recent years. All building permits were reviewed for 2005, roughly the peak of development and inflation of real estate values, and for 2009. In 2005, permits were granted for \$1,518,650 of building projects, with only one project representing new construction. Construction estimated at costing \$231,000 was undertaken by the Town. In 2009, permits were granted for \$12,971,270 of building projects, including a permit for \$12,039,000 for Rockport Music, a new construction project. Without Rockport Music, building permits for \$887,270 worth of construction were granted—about half of the total value granted in 2005. The Rockport



Construction of Shalin Liu Performance Center

Art Association undertook a \$42,000 construction project in 2009 that was funded by Community Preservation funds.

Data on population and households is available on a “block” basis from the decennial US Census. Appendix 1, References, includes information on the source of data and blocks used to closely approximate the Downtown area selected for this analysis. This data is from 2000 so there have been some changes, as noted above, in the last ten years.

As noted below there has been some transition in housing units from rental to ownership of condominiums.

Census Block data from 2000, the most recent year for which data is available, shows a population in the Downtown of 1,012 people living in 608 households. Of the households Downtown, 212 or 35% are occupied by families, and 396 or 65% are occupied by individuals or people not related to each other. Of the family households, about 60% are two person

households and another 23% are three person households. Of the 212 family households, 168 are married-couple families. Of the nonfamily households, 91% are one-person households, and the rest are two- and three-person households. Finally, 56% of the households in the downtown block data are occupied by renters, while 44% are owner-occupied.

This information provides an interesting snapshot of downtown Rockport. The small Downtown area included in this study for planning purposes contains about 13% of the Town’s population. Overall, 60% of the downtown households are single person households, and another 25% are two person households. Downtown Rockport provides housing for small households predominantly, with single living the most common pattern. As of 2000, a clear majority of the households were renter-occupied. Information on sales of condominiums contained in Table 1 below suggests that the movement of rental units into the buyer’s market is well underway.

Table 1: Last Year Building/Unit Was Sold by Area of Downtown

Year	Bearskin Neck	General Zone	Entire Downtown	# of all units Condo units
2005-2007	37	95	169	87
1995-2004	64	137	263	72
1980-1994	33	72	126	10
Before 1980	2	10	16	
No data		24	127	
Total	136	338	701	

Source: Rockport Assessors' Data 2010

Additional information is available in the 2000 Census Block data on gender, race, and age. Table 2 indicates that the population in the Downtown area is almost 58% female and 42% male. Children 17 and under make up only 12% of the population, and are almost equally distributed between male and female. The population age 65 and over

represents 28% of the population, but almost 68% of these “seniors” are female. The Rockport population is almost entirely white, with only about 3% of the population of another race or of mixed-race ancestry. The information on race available in March of 2011 from the 2010 Census

shows that racial make-up in Rockport has not changed. The population is still 97% white.

Table 2: Characteristics of Downtown Residents

	Number	Percent
Male	428	42.3%
Female	584	57.7%
Sub-Total	1,012	
17 and under		
Male	59	48.4%
Female	63	51.6%
Sub-Total	122	
Over 65		
Male	92	32.3%
Female	193	67.7%
Sub-Total	285	
Race		
White	984	97.2%
African/Am	1	0.1%
Asian	13	1.3%
Mixed Race	14	1.4%
Sub-total	1,012	

U.S. Census, 2000. Rockport Block data

Finally, vacancies existed in 13% of the housing stock in Downtown Rockport when the 2000 Census was taken in April. Eighty-nine vacancies were comprised of 51 vacant seasonal rentals and 26 units that were vacant because they were for sale or rent, or recently sold or rented and not yet occupied. "Other" category made up the remainder of the vacancies. As noted earlier, in

the 2010 Census 23.9% of the buildings town-wide were vacant for any reason—an impressive increase from the 2000 town-wide vacancy rate of 16.9%. More detailed information is not yet available (May 2011) on the subcategories that comprise these vacancies. It is possible that these changes are associated with conversion of downtown rental units to condominiums, which is occurring with more frequency. The condominium units are attractive vacation options for people intending only week-end or seasonal use.

DOWNTOWN LAND USE AND LAND USE DYNAMICS

Table 3 summarizes raw land use data for the entire Downtown area from data collected by the Assessors' office. Map 2 displays that data for the entire Downtown, for the General Zone, and for Bearskin Neck. This information readily shows the concentration of mixed uses on Bearskin Neck, along Main Street, extending up Mt. Pleasant Street, and Broadway. Parcels that are exclusively commercial are relatively rare in the General Zone and Bearskin Neck. Exclusive commercial properties are primarily bank buildings and smaller scattered site commercial uses. The MBTA Station area commercial properties are almost all exclusive uses. Exclusive residential uses in the General Zone, including Bearskin Neck, are also less common. There is a cluster of exclusively residential properties on the side streets of Bearskin Neck, and on lots lacking street frontage on Main Street. Exclusive residential use dominates the portion of the Downtown area in the Residential Zone, with some mixed uses scattered in.

Table 3: Rockport Downtown Study Area: Current Land Use Profile

Land Use	Lot Area (Sq Ft)			Building Area (Gross)	
	No. of Parcels	Total	Average Size of Lots	Total	Average Bldg. Area
Single Family	69	230,679	3,343	153,969	2,231
Two Family	15	62,037	4,136	45,537	3,036
Three Family	8	45,657	5,707	34,945	4,368
Vacant w/ Accessory Building	6	5,814	969	0	0
Multiple Housing on One Parcel	8	32,003	4,000	15,550	1,944
Aparts-4-8 units	6	24,247	4,041	24,974	4,162
Apts-8plus	1	34,907	34,907	24,476	24,476
Undevelopable Residential Land	8	16,498	2,062	0	0
Motel (Type C)	4	57,142	14,286	31,362	7,841
Retail (>10,000)	8	26,584	3,323	38,577	4,822
Commercial Building	1	6,531	6,531	4,139	4,139
Small Retail & Service (<10,000 sq ft)	67	161,036	2,404	224,679	3,353
Eating & Drinking Estab.	10	16,419	1,642	22,669	2,267
Auto Repair	1	5,550	5,550	4,000	4,000
Parking Lots	2	33,149	16,575	0	0
General Office Bldg	2	5,000	2,500	9,726	4,863
Bank	3	34,068	11,356	11,168	3,723
Art Galleries	6	10,243	1,707	20,899	3,483
Developable Commercial Land	1	1,050	1,050	0	0
Undevelopable Commercial Land	4	3,245	811	0	0
US Government	1	27,007	27,007	9,089	9,089
Rockport Municipal Land& Buildings	28	569,075	109,997	49,794	25,282
Churches and Non-Profits	9	117,289	40,767	37,669	11,554
Condominium, Primary Address	16	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	284	1,525,230		763,222	

Source: Rockport Assessors Data, 2009

Map 2 clearly shows that the General Zone in the Downtown area retains its historical land use pattern. Exclusive residential use on some of the

waterfront parcels has not crowded out the numerous retail and commercial uses. This map also assists the Town as they consider General

Zone changes recommended as more appropriate for the area.

Table 3 indicates the actual count of uses within the Downtown area. This information reinforces the observation that many of the historic uses that developed the Downtown into what it is today remain in use. Six churches still exist in Downtown, representing a Catholic congregation and a variety of Protestant congregations. Municipal uses are concentrated on Broadway and include the U.S. Post Office. There is also significant park land in the Downtown. Buildings owned by non-profit organizations are primarily located within the commercial area of the Downtown.

Going back to Table 1, the table also provides information on the dynamics of downtown real estate. Table 1 shows by year or grouped years the number of buildings and/or units sold by the year of their most recent sale. This table indicates that virtually all of the buildings in each of three areas reviewed (Bearskin Neck, General Zone overall, and the entire Downtown) changed ownership in the last 30 years. Few of these buildings have been in continuous ownership of more than 30 years. Over the period of the last 12 recorded years (1995 to 2007) there was a steady increase in real estate transactions so that almost 10% of the properties in the entire Downtown changed hands in 2007. This same ratio existed in the other two study areas. One important factor was the increased number of properties divided into condominium units. The right column indicated that 42 of the 69 properties that were last sold in 2007 were condominium units. This dynamic represents an increase in the overall number of properties and increased fragmentation in ownership of larger properties in the area.

HISTORIC RESOURCES IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA

The historic resources in Rockport, from the buildings, to wharves, to streetscape, are an important part of what makes Rockport an attractive place to live or to visit.

Table 4: Actual Year Construction of Building in Downtown Rockport

Time period	Number Built		
	Bearskin Neck	General Zone	Downtown
Before 1800	6	54	81
1800-1899	18	98	201
1900-1929	20	48	97
1930-1959	54	71	85
1960-pres	12	38	107
Total	110	309	571
<i>% of total</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>54%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Rockport Assessors' Records 2010

Table 4 summarizes the “actual year built” data from the Assessors’ database. Any properties more than 50 years old can be eligible for the National Register of Historic Properties, based on four evaluation criteria for the significance of the property. More than 80% of the properties in the Downtown, or 464 properties, were built 50 or more years ago. This percentage is even greater for Bearskin Neck (almost 90%) and the General Zone (about 87%). Less than 25% of the properties on Bearskin Neck were built before 1900, while in the General Zone and Downtown overall this percentage was close to 50%.

Map 3 indicates the location of the currently existing Local Historic Districts in the Downtown area. These include the Main Street, Broadway, Mt. Pleasant–South Street (only a couple of properties within the area defined as Downtown), and Downtown Local Historic Districts. These districts cover the heart of the Downtown defined for the purposes of this study. They do not include Bearskin Neck. An historic property survey was completed in February 2010 on 50 Bearskin Neck parcels to identify which buildings retain their historic value and character, and to identify the quality of that character. When the remainder of the properties are surveyed, a national, state, or local historic district could be proposed. Wendy Frontiero, the preservation consultant

undertaking the survey, indicated that many of the buildings on Bearskin Neck retain their historic features and design integrity. The establishment of four local historic districts is a significant commitment for a community, as such districts can often be difficult to establish, and can create controversy in their implementation. Towns must establish a Historic District Commission (here called the Rockport Historical Commission) to review proposed changes to buildings within the Districts, and to approve or deny these proposed changes. Rockport's review criteria is minimal and sticks closely to the basic requirements of state law. Other communities utilize design guidelines and other more detailed requirements in order to assure the maintenance of the valuable historic resources. The Historical Commission is developing Design Guidelines for Rockport's historic districts as this plan goes to press.

A review of Map 3 shows that likely more than half of the properties within the Downtown area are not in a local historic district and thereby do not benefit from review by the Historical Commission. Many of these properties have important historic features that are protected only by the knowledge and informed decisions of their owners in making architectural changes. A construction project requiring a special permit or variance may benefit from the knowledge of historic architectural features by members of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Many communities in recent years have adopted a "demolition delay" by-law that is designed to allow a Historical Commission to require a delay in the demolition of an identified historic resource, allowing time to see if solutions can be found to save the building. Rockport has not adopted this option, despite the extensive historic resources that are essential to its primary economic base—tourism. As a result, a number of buildings within the Downtown have been demolished for the construction of new buildings. In all cases, the Historical Commission had review over the new buildings proposed within the Local Historic Districts, and the developers constructed buildings that generally fit into the Rockport streetscape. However, this outcome is not guaranteed.

Zoning and Development Restrictions in the Downtown Area

Rockport's Downtown includes the entire General Zone located in that area, and some of the Residential Zone as well. Rockport has so-called "pyramid" zoning, meaning that everything that is allowed in less intensive zones is also allowed in zones that allow more intensive uses. As a result, any use that can be undertaken in the Residential Zone is allowed in the General Zone, with the addition of retail uses; for example, shops for custom work, professional offices and banks, and light manufacturing. Private clubs and meeting halls, material storage, boatyards, and a number of other uses are allowed by Special Permit. Uses in the Residential Zone include all residential uses, certain offices and home occupations and some allowances for multi-family housing with a Special Permit required for more than four units.

Mixed uses are mentioned in the Rockport Zoning By-law only to describe how parking requirements are to be determined. This parking detail is largely irrelevant in Downtown as few mixed-use parcels meet the current parking requirements, or ever could. An explicit allowance of mixed uses in Downtown, with a description of necessary provisions, could simplify requirements and thus encourage developers seeking to develop mixed uses.

Overall, current zoning provides disincentives for maintaining the pattern of uses and the existing streetscape in the Downtown area. Acquisition of multiple parcels would allow the development of single family homes on 7,500sf lots on Bearskin Neck. In recent years, construction of a single-family house out of scale with surrounding buildings has led to considerable concern over the future of the Neck. The required setbacks in the General Zone are found on very few of the existing parcels in the Zone. These setback requirements are inappropriate for a dense Downtown where buildings have a pattern of no

setbacks from the sidewalk. Thus the zoning regulations have been found to be largely untenable.

Table 5 : Size of Parcels

Size of Parcel	Number of Parcels		
	Bearskin Neck	General Zone	Entire Downtown
Less than 2000sf	70	102	126
2,000sf-7,500sf	16	106	236
7,500sf-10,000sf	2	9	38
Over 10,000sf	1	14	87
No land information	55	139	205
% total parcels w/ no land information	27%	68%	100%

Source: Rockport Assessors' Records 2010

Table 5 summarizes the size of parcels on Bearskin Neck and in the overall General Zone (minimum lot size of 7,500sf) and in the remainder of the Downtown where Residential Zoning requires 10,000sf lots. Only 23 of the 139 parcels in the General Zone (the data includes Bearskin Neck) are consistent with the zoning requirements. On Bearskin Neck, only three parcels of the 55 are consistent with zoning lot size requirements. When looking at the remainder of the Downtown area that is in the Residential Zone, 87 parcels are consistent with the 10,000sf minimum lot size. The many parcels for which no information on lot size is provided are likely condominiums where ownership for the purposes of tax records does not include any listed land area.

This brief analysis indicates that there is a serious zoning mismatch in the Downtown. As a result, many of the changes in use or physical improvements made to buildings in the area require Special Permits or Variances. According to the Bearskin Neck Planning Study, "The discontinuance clause establishes that any nonconforming building or structure that is not

used for a period of two years will be deemed abandoned, and its nonconforming character will be extinguished. Since most of the buildings are nonconforming, this provision could hamper efforts to preserve the character of old buildings that are not otherwise protected by historic regulations."

In 2010, consultants from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) began assisting the Town with a review of the General Zone in the Downtown. They are reviewing a variety of provisions within zoning, such as the definition of a half-story, allowed pitches for roofs on residential properties, and allowed activities. Their final report should be published about the time of the release of this plan (June 2011)

Several state laws and associated regulations also address land use and community character in the coastal areas of the Downtown. Most notable of these are Chapter 91, state building code, and the process of defining the base flood elevation (BFE) as identified on the Federal Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM).

The Rockport Municipal Harbor Plan summarizes Chapter 91 as follows: "Chapter 91 and the corresponding waterways regulations (310 CMR 9.00)...applies in tidelands. Tidelands refer to all land presently or formerly beneath the waters of the ocean, including lands that are always submerged as well as those in the intertidal area, i.e., below the mean high water mark. This area is governed by a concept in property law known as the public trust doctrine which establishes that all rights in tidelands and the water are held by the state "in trust" for the benefit of the public for the purposes of fishing, fowling, and navigation." "...Chapter 91 jurisdiction extends landward to the historic high water line...applies to filled as well as flowed tidelands, so that any filled areas, moving inland to the point of the historic high tide line, are subject to Chapter 91 jurisdiction." Chapter 91 was passed to support the five following objectives: "1) ensure the waterfront is used primarily for water-dependent purposes, 2) provide public access, 3) facilitate other state programs related to shoreline use and

conservation, 4) strengthen local controls and encourage harbor planning, and 5) ensure accountability to present and future public interests.” Appendix 2 contains a list of current Chapter 91 licenses in Downtown Rockport.

The Bearskin Neck Planning study reported the following on flood hazards. “Bearskin Neck and parts of the Downtown are located in a Flood Zone V2, according to maps and regulations of the National Flood Insurance Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This assessment has been expanded upon in the current draft of the Rockport Hazard Mitigation Plan (RHMP—see Appendix 1 for reference) that identifies Bearskin Neck as a “highest priority” area for mitigation of flood hazard “because it is the primary tourist area and therefore critical to the economic health of the community.” Bearskin Neck is subject to “severe, recurring” 100-year coastal floods with wave action and base flood elevations ranging from 16 to 18 feet including the effects of wave action. In the case of Rockport, the base flood elevation is measured relative to a Reference Mark located at the intersection of Broadway and Mount Pleasant Street, which registers an elevation of 13.45 feet according to the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD). In other words, there have been floods with waves approximately three to five feet high above the reference mark affecting Bearskin Neck within statistical periods of 100 years. The Blizzard of 1978 is the most memorable one in recent history.

In early 2011, FEMA undertook a Risk Mapping Assessment and Planning project for coastal Massachusetts (Risk MAP). Preliminary work is projected to be available in June 2012 with the completion projected for June 2013. The end product for Rockport and other communities will be a map at two-foot intervals indicating the location of various coastal flood risks, and the development of a mitigation plan.

Bearskin Neck contains three wharfs that are included in the risk assessment work: Tuna Wharf is privately owned; Bradley Wharf is town-owned and contains Motif #1, and White Wharf that encloses Old Harbor on the northwest side of



Street on Bearskin Neck

Bearskin Neck, also Town owned. Bradley and White Wharf have both had recent repairs, with White Wharf having been almost completely rebuilt. Engineering work for further improvements to White Wharf has been completed and could be implemented.

T-Wharf is identified in the RHMP as an area of “High” priority for mitigation. It is home to, and partially owned by, the Sandy Bay Yacht Club. The Yacht Club’s deck is on wooden pilings that are managed by the Rockport DPW. This deck is vulnerable and often damaged in large storms. Rockport Harbor, where T-Wharf is located, is largely protected by the breakwater constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers. This breakwater has not been repaired since 1978 and is in need of upgrades. The pilings also need repair work.

New construction or significant alterations to existing buildings within the V-zone may not be eligible for Federal Insurance protection. Special use and design provisions apply to buildings at the ground floor level in order to make a building safe for specified limited uses and strong enough to withstand wave action. These requirements may

limit potential for renovation and upgrading of existing buildings.

The Risk MAP project may make some modifications to the flood zones and other risk features in the Downtown waterfront area. These changes will need to be considered when going forward with any proposed changes to the Downtown area. The Massachusetts State Building Code governs construction everywhere in the Commonwealth, with Section 780 CMR 115G particularly covering “flood resistant construction.” The impact of these building requirements on buildings in the Downtown in Flood Zones identified on the Flood Insurance Rate Map is summarized below in Table 6. These provisions were selected as they impact the expense of making building improvements and impact the appearance of the buildings. The downtown portion of the FIRM map is included in Map 4. The map indicates that most of the coastal area in the Downtown is in the VC zone, with a small area also in the AO zone.

The result of this review is that virtually all of the buildings on Bearskin Neck and on the northeast side of Main Street are in flood zones AO or VC. Major improvements to these buildings would require compliance with State Building Code requirements, as well as other requirements. Major improvements would require both building the additions above the base flood elevation (BFE) and making the building accessible, two improvements that would add significant changes to the appearance of the area and how it functions.

Massachusetts adopted the International Building Code in 2010, with some amendments tailored to Massachusetts. One provision of the new building requirements is

more restrictive for the rehabilitation of historic properties within flood zones. The Code requires that a variance from the Code for historic properties that allows them not to meet the height and construction requirements in flood zones is limited to properties that have been reviewed and deemed as having historic significance by the Massachusetts Historical Commission or the U.S. Department of the Interior. Rockport, with only locally-designated historic districts, has no properties within the flood zones that automatically qualify for the variance. Properties in Rockport seeking a variance must prepare a “Form B – Building” available on the Massachusetts Historical Commission website. These Form-B’s will be reviewed by Commission staff and determined to be not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, eligible as an individual listing, or eligible as part of an area listing. A positive determination of eligibility can be used to secure a variance.



Buildings along waterfront on Bearskin Neck

Table 6: MA Building Code Requirements for Flood Resistant Construction

	Flood Hazard Zones - AO	High Hazard Zones - VC
Definition	1% or greater chance of flooding in any give year – not subject to wave height in excess of 3 feet	Subject to wave height in excess of 3 feet or subject to high velocity wave run-up or wave-induced erosion as well as subject to a 1% or greater chance of flooding in any given year
Design Requirements	Must be designed and signed by a registered design professional indicating that the proposed methods of construction are in accordance with state building code requirements	Must be designed and signed by a registered design professional indicating that the proposed methods of construction are in accordance with state building code requirements
Height and Uses in relation to Base Flood Elevation	Lowest floor shall be located at or above the Base Flood Elevation, including cellar floors, unless they are used solely for egress, incidental storage, garage, or parking, or unless impermeable to the passage of water.	For new construction, the lowest horizontal structural member shall be at least 2 ft. above Base Flood Elevation. No human occupancy in the 2ft. zone and below.
Construction Requirements in Velocity Zone		Walls and partitions permitted to enclose the 2ft. and below zone, as long as not part of the structural support of the building and designed to break away consistent with design requirements and not cause structural damage to the remainder of the building.
General Construction Requirements in Flood Zones	Existing foundations may be repaired. If replace entire foundation, the foundation needs to be brought into compliance. If substantial improvement is exclusively a lateral addition that does not rely on the support of the existing structure, only the lateral addition must comply with construction requirements in the Flood Hazard zone.	Existing foundations may be repaired. If replace entire foundation, the foundation needs to be brought into compliance. If substantial improvement is exclusively a lateral addition that does not rely on the support of the existing structure, only the lateral addition must comply with construction requirements in the Flood Hazard zone.
Exemptions to General Construction Requirements in Flood Zones	Improvements to correct existing violations of state or local health, sanitary or safety codes to the minimum level to assure safe living conditions Alteration of a “historic structure” that is listed on the State Register of Historic Places that will not preclude the structure’s continued designation as a “historic structure”	Improvements to correct existing violations of state or local health, sanitary or safety codes to the minimum level to assure safe living conditions Alteration of a “historic structure” that is listed on the State Register of Historic Places that will not preclude the structure’s continued designation as a “historic structure”

Source: 780 CMR 120.G Flood Resistant Construction and Construction in Coastal Dunes (8/8/08)

CIRCULATION AND PARKING ISSUES IN THE DOWNTOWN AND BEARSKIN NECK

Few traffic studies have been undertaken for public purposes in the Downtown area or Bearskin Neck. Review of recent development projects in the study area, and review of citizen complaints on specific matters, has identified the following traffic and parking issues:

- There is not enough parking in the Downtown area, and not enough to serve the new Rockport Music performance facility, as required by the Zoning By-law parking requirements. Most parcels in the Downtown area lack parking to serve the uses on the parcel, as required by the Zoning By-law.
- Traffic circulation is slow during the tourist season, complicated by the one-way street patterns.
- The Town developed a satellite parking lot at the Transfer Station with shuttle bus service to Downtown. Information provided to tourists is lacking in accuracy and accessibility and needs to be improved in order to increase use and improve functioning of the service.
- The street approach into the Downtown area, Five Corners, is confusing in terms of traffic direction, and the signs do not provide a clear message to inform tourists regarding the direction to resources.
- In general, wayfinding signage at the entrances to Town and in the Downtown area is deficient in continuity and in clarity of information.
- Circulation is a significant problem on Bearskin Neck because there is no way to separate cars and trucks from pedestrians. Further, many tourists don't know where they are going and accidentally drive onto Bearskin Neck, adding to the confusion. Truck deliveries from larger trucks create

serious problems when they attempt to turn around or back out to exit the Neck.

- Tourist buses in Dock Square are perceived as taking too long to unload passengers and as occupying the drop-off location for too long with their engines running.
- Sidewalks are in generally good condition in the Downtown area and are found on most streets. There are no sidewalks on Bearskin Neck, resulting in significant conflict between traffic and pedestrians.
- Pedestrian circulation in the MBTA Station area is deficient on the streets (Railroad Avenue and Poole's Lane) as well as within and between the commercial and residential uses in the area.
- There is virtually no accommodation for bicycles anywhere in the Downtown area. Some bicycle racks have recently been made available through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and have been placed at locations identified for them. There are no dedicated lanes for bicycles. Only the generally slow speed of vehicles in the congested streets, except for Broadway, reduces the severity of conflict between bicycles and cars.
- Downtown Rockport, served by Cape Ann Transit Authority, has narrow streets making it



Pedestrians on Bearskin Neck

difficult for CATA buses, and the numerous tour buses, to navigate.

Recent parking information was collected during the review of a Site Plan for the proposed Rockport Music performance center. In addition, the Town recently undertook a count of existing parking spaces on Bearskin Neck, and a discussion of the truck delivery concerns was taken up by the Board of Selectmen.

Recently, Rockport Music's proposed development of a performance facility with 335 seats identified the need for access to 125 parking spaces in as close proximity as possible to the facility at 37 Main Street. It was determined that shuttle service would be essential for a solution.

Appendix 4 contains the Rockport Performance Center Parking Plan, including Tables 1 and 2 from the Site Plan Review Application dated May 2007. Information in these tables show that 125 spaces could be found within the Downtown area outside working hours, with spaces available at Rockport National Bank (40) and the MBTA Station lot (85). During working hours, parking would rely on shuttle service to Rockport High School (up to 100 spaces) and Blue Gate Meadow Transfer Station (up to 125 spaces). Identification of these and other parking opportunities and development of relationships to make them available sets a standard for other organizations that may occasionally need large numbers of parking spaces. These efforts did not include public parking spaces within the Downtown area except for the spaces at the MBTA lot.

Parking on Bearskin Neck is a severe problem, with few spaces to meet the dense uses in the area. Street access is equally restrictive, with one two-way street at the beginning of the Neck, becoming one-way outbound, with another one-way in-bound to complete the circulation. The conflict with pedestrians during the tourist season is significant. Traffic moves at a very slow speed to accommodate pedestrians, and there are no pavement markings or signage, other than the one-way signs, to inform drivers not to enter Bearskin Neck, or to assist them once on the Neck.

A count of parking spaces on Bearskin Neck indicates there is a total of 56 public parking spaces allocated between three lots—at Old Harbor, Rockport Harbor, and at the end of the Neck. The Old Harbor spaces are restricted to residents (9 spaces) and people who lease slips in the Harbor (8 spaces), and the spaces at the end of the Neck are metered. There are 10 metered spaces at this location, one of which is handicapped. The 29 spaces on Rockport Harbor are the most accessible to drivers, although not well-signed and with many spaces restricted for resident use. The remaining spaces are to be available to fishermen. There are approximately 82 parking spaces on privately-owned parcels. In many cases, it is difficult to identify exactly on which parcels these parking spaces are located. The estimated number assumes the greatest density of spaces possible in any location obviously used for parking.

This total of 138 parking spaces serves the 148 parcels that have built uses on them. There are approximately 43 residential units on Bearskin Neck, estimated from the number of units of specific sizes in the Assessors' land use data. Some of the 20 commercial condominium units, or 10 buildings with retail units, may also house residential apartments, but it is not clear how many there may be. It is clear from these numbers that there could be enough parking spaces to serve one auto/residential unit, as well as to serve the commercial units. Most private parking is located on a small number of residential properties, so that the distribution is fairly uneven. A total of 28 privately-owned parcels house the 82 parking spaces counted. This arrangement results in complicated borrowing or leasing arrangements to maximize availability of parking on Bearskin Neck.

There is virtually no on-site parking for commercial uses. These uses are dependent on off-site parking for staff, and dependent on pedestrians for their customers. Much of the public parking on Bearskin Neck is of little value to potential customers of Neck businesses, except for the metered spaces at the end of the Neck. Informing tourists of this fact could lead to a

reduction in the traffic that currently causes auto-pedestrian conflict on Bearskin Neck. Some of the same limitations on parking exist in parts of the rest of the Downtown, especially in the area within the General Zone where there are particularly dense uses and the greatest number of mixed uses. Finding parking immediately off Bearskin Neck is not the solution for most long term or incidental parking. Further sites within the Downtown (Town Hall public lot, MBTA lot, the large private lot across from Front Beach) are options that could be considered if a negotiated agreement and proper signage could be obtained.

Discussions with the Board of Selectmen indicated that truck deliveries, particularly by large trucks, pose a safety issue on Bearskin Neck. Some trucks, particularly those delivering to restaurants, are unable to turn around so must back out of Bearskin Neck. With pedestrians walking in the street, and no separation between pedestrians and vehicles, it is a potentially dangerous situation. Some solutions have been discussed, such as limited hours for deliveries for large trucks, or requiring trucks to park outside Bearskin Neck to unload their product. Given staff changes in Town Hall during 2009/10, this discussion has not been followed up by efforts at a solution.

Based on the width of streets and intensity of abutting uses, little can be done to improve accommodation for bicycles. Developing a "share the road" program with signage might be one option. As noted earlier, the slow pace of traffic in much of the Downtown does improve safety for bicyclists. The most important accommodation implemented during the spring of 2010 is the installation of bicycle racks. Such parking accommodation can make bicyclists feel welcome and provide them with convenient parking that does not conflict with pedestrian use of the

sidewalk. The program will be assessed after the first season of use to identify any additional need for bicycle parking.

As noted earlier, pedestrians are served by generally good sidewalks. A number of the intersections need to be upgraded to install handicapped accessible crossing areas. Crosswalks could also be improved to reinforce the multi-use nature of downtown circulation. The occasional use of bump-outs or traffic calming devices provides another option. These safety measures currently do not exist anywhere in the Downtown. Bearskin Neck is the biggest challenge for pedestrian/auto conflicts. Typically, the public right-of-way area between buildings is paved from storefront to storefront, leaving no obvious space for exclusive pedestrian use or storefront activities. The volume of pedestrians during the height of the tourist season consumes the entirety of the main way on Bearskin Neck, and much of the side streets as well. At this point, most of the transportation chaos results from people in cars who do not know where to go, and how to get out of difficult places where they have found themselves. Approaches such as pavement materials and markings, and clear tourist handouts will be addressed later in this plan. The matter of recommended sidewalk improvements needs to be addressed also.

The shuttle service from the Transfer Station Parking Lot plays an important role in reducing the number of automobiles in the Downtown. Table 7 shows the usage of the CATA shuttle for the last four years, with incomplete records for 2009. The data show a generally stable to slight decline in users. Annual ridership is around 20,000 trips per season. At \$1/trip/person, this generates about \$20,000 in income to support the shuttle service.

Table 7: Use of CATA Shuttle, 2007-2010

	Total Passenger Trips				Total Individual Riders			
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2007	2008	2009	2010
May	1,155	1,774	1,710	1,937	577	887	855	968
June	2,453	1,459	1,402	1,199	1,226	729	701	599
July	8,651	7,100	7,113	8,435	4,325	3,550	3,556	4,217
August	7,395	8,155	6,895	7,713	3,697	4,077	3,447	3,856
September	3,328	1,257	2,340	2,623	1,664	628	1,170	1,311
October	548	372	53	156	274	186	26	78
TOTAL	25,537	22,125	21,522	24,073	13,770	12,065	11,764	13,039

The shuttle has a schedule with stops in the Downtown area. Several years ago, a parking consultant suggested adjustments designed to increase ridership and enhance visitors' comfort about getting out of their cars and into public transit. In reviewing shuttle information for this Plan, some short-term improvements readily presented themselves for discussion. Longer term improvements can also make a big contribution. These recommendations will be described in the Recommendations section of this document.

MBTA commuter rail service is a significant transit resource for the Rockport population. Commuter rail service is located at the periphery of the defined Downtown area. The parking area, partially owned by the Town and partially by the MBTA, can currently serve 85 cars. The Rockport Commuter Rail Station Area Plan indicates that there is a clear deficit of parking at the MBTA station, with current demand easily exceeding 100 vehicles. The redesigned parking lot currently in final design with the MBTA is anticipated to provide for 159 cars. Proposed redevelopment initially included a building to reduce noise levels from idling trains at this layover station. Plans continue to propose expansion of the area providing handicapped access, expansion of the covered waiting area, and an increased number of parking spaces. The new station will provide some bicycle parking and easier access for bus pick-up and drop-off. Improved bicycle parking will do little to increase bicycle use, as there are few

spaces and no covered area for the bicycles. Good bicycle planning should now be included in rail stations as a matter of course. While bus accommodation will be improved, the layout includes an awkward and time-consuming turning process.

Efforts were made during the planning process for the MBTA to locate the layover station outside the Downtown, but this effort was not successful. Locating the layover station elsewhere would have allowed for significant additional area for parking, bus access, and bicycle accommodation. The current status of the project requires that the town accept the current configuration, and look to the future to address some of these challenges in other ways.

Traffic is an issue when trains arrive or are scheduled to depart. As part of the MBTA study in 2007, an assessment of access to the MBTA station was undertaken. There is no signal or other means of control at the entry on Railroad Avenue. The entryway is approximately 42 feet wide to accommodate parking head-in on the west side of the access road. Sidewalks are provided on either side of the entrance, but there are no sidewalks within the station. A traffic turning count was taken at the intersection between 5 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. on Wednesday, May 24, 2006 for the arrival of two trains. Approximately 700 vehicles were counted on Railroad Avenue during the peak hour. A total of

53 vehicles entered the station and 51 left the station. Train traffic accounted for about 7% of the traffic in the area that afternoon. It was noted that the pedestrian count in the area was low.

During the production of this plan, the Town was informed that once again the MBTA Station design effort has been terminated due to inadequate MBTA resources for implementation.

DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE AND STREETScape

In addition to infrastructure that enhances (or impedes) circulation, other infrastructure of interest in the Downtown area includes sewer and water service, public lighting, and public ground-level structures, such as benches and waste receptacles. Water service has been available in Downtown Rockport since the 1890's, and sewer service was installed in the 1930's and 40's. Water and sewer service is adequate in the area. The Town is currently restricted from adding any new users to the sewer system until more work is undertaken to improve the "inflow and infiltration (I&I)" in the entire system. Development on vacant lots is restricted, but redevelopment of existing lots can continue existing sewer service. More work is required in the Downtown, as well as in other areas of town, to inspect the pipes and line them where necessary before the moratorium can be lifted.

National Grid owns and maintains Rockport's light poles and provides the electricity for them. The section of light poles from Dock Square to Beach Street was provided with underground electrical service many years ago. These poles are old and in serious need of assessment for repair or replacement. The poles are commonly used metal reproductions of a mid-19th century style. The luminaries are plastic and in poor condition—yellowed with poor quality light. These lights could be an attractive resource if they were in better condition. As an interim measure, several residents painted the metal reproduction light poles. Conversations have been held with National Grid regarding replacement policies for poles and luminaries for the reproduction lights in the

Downtown. It has been estimated that new poles might be installed in 2011.

The remainder of the Downtown area is served by overhead street lights principally on wooden poles. Many of the poles on Bearskin Neck are no longer perpendicular and carry many wires. They are particularly unattractive in an area with extensive historic resources. There has been no consistent changeover to sodium vapor lights in the Downtown as of this writing, but it is planned in the future.

Residents have identified "over lighting" as something that diminishes the character of the historic area. Bright lights are out of character with a historic setting, and can present a vision hazard when directed at drivers and pedestrians. Protests have arisen sporadically when new floodlights have been installed.

Sidewalks and curbing are generally in good condition on the main arteries in the Downtown. In many cases, sidewalks are concrete and retain unbroken surfaces. On Railroad Avenue and King Street the sidewalks are asphalt. Those on King Street tend to have little reveal remaining and are not well-defined. This has allowed people to park cars over the sidewalks. Many of the narrow back streets have little or no sidewalks so pedestrians must walk in the streets. Most of these streets could not accommodate cars and pedestrians if a sidewalk were a separate installation from the street.

In addition to reviewing lights and sidewalks, Town officials have recently begun to consider the importance of an attractive "streetscape." This term refers to the overall design, including specific features, as well as maintenance plans for private and public areas that contribute to the appearance of the streets and sidewalks in Town. In addition to lights and sidewalks, streetscape also includes curbing, trees and other plantings, street crosswalks and handicapped access, and street furniture such as trash receptacles and other amenities. Granite curbing and other granite roadway features add an important component to the distinctive character of Rockport. The use of granite for fence posts between sidewalk and

front yards continues the Town's historic appearance and character. The Rockport Chamber of Commerce has discussed acquisition of benches and trash receptacles with a uniform design vocabulary. The appearance and functionality of parking meters has also been considered. Wayfinding signage is both part of the streetscape and essential to circulation. While many private homes and properties are well-maintained, significant effort is needed to achieve an attractive streetscape throughout the Downtown area.

The recent installation of bicycle racks has added both an attractive and functional element to the downtown streetscape.

The Role of Downtown in the Rockport Economy

The Rockport economy is for the most part characterized by retail, service, finance, and cultural businesses. Most of the "storefront" businesses are located in the Downtown area as defined for this study, or strung along upper Main Street heading toward Gloucester. There are several businesses located on Mt. Pleasant Street and Granite Street as well. It is likely that a large number of businesses operate as "home occupations," but these are more difficult to identify.

The 2004 Community Development Plan summarized several key characteristics of the Rockport economy based on 2000 Census data:

- Residents of Rockport "exceed the region in obtaining college degrees."
- Median household income "grew strongly in the 1990's, although it is below the region's" median household income.
- The Town provides "one full or part-time job for every three working residents."
- Approximately 70% of employed residents work out of town.
- Between 1990 and 2000, Rockport residents in the workforce grew by 2.7% but did not keep pace with population growth (3.8%) However, the number of jobs grew during the period.
- "Over half of the private sector jobs in Rockport are provided by hotels, inns, and restaurants (33%), and by retailing (22%)." Most of these jobs are located within the Downtown area.

Much of the information collected above comes from the decennial census. Results of the 2010 Census are now being compiled, so this information will change. Table 8 shows another set of information also collected by the U.S. Census and available on an annual basis for zip codes. Table 8 indicates the types of businesses by NAIC code, and by number of employees. This data is only for businesses that have employees. The data indicate that a total of 200 Rockport businesses have an employee, and that most—about 75%—have four or fewer employees. Only eight businesses report having more than 20 workers. As other information has suggested, most of the businesses are in retail trade (40) and accommodation and food services (37). These businesses are followed by construction (25) and professional, scientific, and technical services (22).

Table 8: Employment in Rockport - 2007

Industry Code	Industry Code Description	Total Estabs.	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100 or more
	Total	200	152	30	10	7	1	0
11	Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture	4	4					
13	Construction	25	21	4				
31	Manufacturing	6	2	1	1	2		
42	Wholesale trade	4	4					
44	Retail trade	40	30	6	1	3		
48	Transportation & warehousing	2	2					
51	Information	2	2					
52	Finance & insurance	10	4	4	1	1		
53	Real estate & rental & leasing	5	4	1				
54	Professional, scientific & technical service	22	19	2	1			
56	Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation ser	11	11					
61	Educational services	3	2	0	1			
62	Health care and social assistance	9	5	2	1	0	1	
71	Arts, entertainment & recreation	6	4	2				
72	Accommodation & food services	37	29	4	3	1		
81	Other services (except public administration)	14	9	4	1			

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Zip Code Data-2007

The Rockport economy is dominated by small businesses with few employees, across all business categories.

Despite the value of the fish landings (see Table 10 below), the reported employment and wages for fishing show 17 employees and \$585 in average weekly wages.

Payroll in Rockport businesses is provided in Table 9 showing the size and significance of the various business sectors in Rockport as shown by data from the Massachusetts Department of Labor and

Workforce Development. This table indicates that 86% of the payrolls for jobs in Rockport are in the “Service-Providing Domain”. Within that sector, 30% of total payroll is in Education and Health Services. The Leisure and Hospitality industry contributes 12% of overall payroll – a significant contribution given the seasonality of the businesses and relatively low wages. Certainly some of the Retail Trade sector (NAICS codes 44-45) and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (NAICS code 53) is a result of tourist activities as well.

Table 9: All Industry Employment and Wages in Rockport, 2009

Sector	# Estab.	Tot Payroll	AV Emp	Av Weekly Wage	% Tot Payroll
Total, All Industries	207	\$42,751,049	1,275	\$645	100%
Goods-Producing Domain	39	\$6,159,448	164	\$722	14%
<i>Natural Resources and Mining</i>	11	\$517,229	17	\$585	1%
<i>Construction</i>	23	\$3,473,352	93	\$718	8%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	5	\$2,168,867	54	\$772	5%
DUR - Durable Goods Manufacturing	3	\$2,014,704	38	\$1,020	5%
Service-Providing Domain	168	\$36,591,601	1,111	\$633	86%
<i>Trade, Transportation and Utilities</i>	45	\$5,539,268	204	\$522	13%
42 - Wholesale Trade	4	\$668,800	8	\$1,608	2%
44-45 - Retail Trade	38	\$3,300,018	168	\$378	8%
<i>Information Activities</i>	3	\$633,546	26	\$469	1%
<i>Financial Activities</i>	13	\$5,126,181	105	\$939	12%
52 - Finance and Insurance	7	\$4,507,510	88	\$985	11%
53 - Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	6	\$618,671	17	\$700	1%
<i>Professional and Business Services</i>	29	\$3,591,441	56	\$1,233	8%
54 - Professional and Technical Services	15	\$2,648,200	29	\$1,756	6%
56 - Administrative and Waste Services	14	\$943,241	27	\$672	2%
<i>Education and Health Services</i>	12	\$12,781,112	290	\$848	30%
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	10	\$4,204,020	108	\$749	10%
<i>Leisure and Hospitality</i>	43	\$4,941,307	292	\$325	12%
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7	\$830,189	31	\$515	2%
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	36	\$4,111,118	260	\$304	10%
<i>Other Services</i>	18	\$980,497	43	\$439	2%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development, ES-202

Leisure and Hospitality contributes a greater proportion of average employment (almost 25%) than total payroll. Payroll is depressed by the lower wages in the sector. This sector also makes up 21% of the total Number of Establishments in Rockport. The highest Average Weekly Wages are in Professional and Business Services but they provide only 4% of Average Employment and 14% of the Number of Establishment.

Only Education and Health Services rival Leisure and Hospitality in the average employment with 290 employees. This sector has many fewer Establishments at twelve, and more than double the Average Weekly Wage of the Leisure and Hospitality sector.

Natural Resources and Mining is largely comprised of the fishing industry in Rockport. This sector makes up 1% of the total payroll and 5% of the

Number of Establishments. The reported Average Weekly Wage is the lowest of all sectors at \$585.

Summarizing these two tables, the Rockport economy is composed of small businesses dominated by the Service-Providing industries. The Durable Goods Manufacturing sector has an average weekly payroll roughly twice that of the Service-Providing Industries, although the 22 businesses in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services have the highest average weekly wages.

The Railroad Avenue area of Rockport contains convenience businesses that generally serve the resident population. These include convenience stores, grocery, take-out prepared foods, hardware, drug, and other similar stores. Businesses on Main Street running toward Gloucester also provide convenience services to residents. Several stores are found in the waterfront area serving the local residents as well as the tourist population. These include clothing stores, jewelry shops, restaurants, and a book store. However, most of the businesses in the waterfront area are dependent on tourists for their customers. Most are open seasonally, and must attract tourists into their shops during a short tourist season.

The Town Clerk's office maintains a list of businesses that have business certificates. The data for all of Rockport can provide some information on characteristics of the Town's businesses. After eliminating businesses that have not renewed their certificates in recent years, the list contains 281 businesses town-wide. Reviewing the list for those with the same address for business and owner, it appears that approximately 133 of these businesses could be home-based, leaving 148 businesses that are not home-based. Of the 148 businesses that are not home-based, 51 indicate that the business owner lives elsewhere in Massachusetts. For another six, the business owner lives out-of-state, generally in surrounding states. Comparing the total of 281 businesses with local certificates to the 207 reported by the Department of Labor and

Workforce Development, it is likely that most of these businesses do not have employees.

A review of the addresses in the information on business certificates indicates that there are approximately 135 businesses with certificates in the Downtown, with 45 on Bearskin Neck, 63 outside of Bearskin Neck but in the General Zone (for a total of 108 business in the General Zone), and a total of approximately 27 businesses on Railroad Avenue and in the shopping centers. Some of these businesses are home-based, with most of those likely to be in the General Zone outside Bearskin Neck.

The Rockport Chamber of Commerce, a division of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, addresses the issues and concerns of the businesses in town. The mission of the Rockport Chamber of Commerce, with over 200 members, is to help Rockport realize its full potential as one of New England's premier tourist destinations; to provide services to businesses, visitors, and the Town for the purpose of maintaining a vital and thriving economy; and to deliver measurable economic benefits to the Town and all those who work to enhance it.

In 2009, the Rockport Chamber of Commerce merged with the Cape Ann Chamber's main office in Gloucester. The Rockport division sponsors a seasonally operated office and information center located at 170 Main Street. It also maintains a Rockport-focused, visitor-oriented website, www.rockportusa.com, which includes a member business directory and links to municipal and community organization websites. Regular meetings of the Rockport Steering Committee, recently re-structured following the principles of the "Downtown Four Point Approach" of the Main Street Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, are held throughout the year. Issues that members have addressed in recent years include downtown infrastructure, traffic patterns and parking, truck service on Bearskin Neck, and the need for wayfinding signs.

In addition to the shops and inns, another key component of the Rockport economy is the waterfront, which attracts customers and provides

employment for those who operate sea-related businesses. Zip code data indicate a maximum of four businesses in Rockport that engage in fishing but this information includes only businesses that have employees. This information suggests that most commercial fisherman (piloting some of the 100 commercial boats identified below) do not have employees.

According to the Rockport Municipal Harbor Plan, the four harbor areas (two located downtown) have a total of 355 boats at slips or on moorings. The Plan indicates that about 1/3 (or about 100 as noted later in the report) of these slips or

from a tank, and from trucks on Granite Pier and T-Wharf. T-Wharf, Pigeon Cove Harbor, and Granite Pier each have hoists which fishermen use to load and off-load their boats.

Table 10 summarizes the number of permits issued to fishermen in Rockport by harbor and year. Table 11 provides data on the landings by year for lobsters as well as all other fish landings. The following discussion addresses data in both Tables 10 and 11. Lobstering is the primary type of commercial fishing (based on number of permits) and also has the greatest value in landings. Other commercial fishing includes groundfish and shrimp. There were 65 lobstermen based in Rockport in 2000, ranking the town 5th in the state for the size of the lobster fleet. In 1999 the Department of Marine Fisheries indicated that Rockport landed a total of 650,671 pounds of lobster, ranking the Town 8th for total catch in the state. By 2009, there were 62 lobstermen. Of those, 38 indicated Rockport Harbor in the Downtown as their home port. There were another 17 Commercial Fishermen Permits (not including lobstering) declaring Rockport as their home port in 2009. Of these, 13 indicated Rockport Harbor was where their vessel was kept. This information

indicates a steady population of commercial fishermen in Rockport, with Rockport Harbor hosting a majority of them. Shell fishing in Sandy Bay is not currently allowed as this area is designated a "Closure area" by the State.



Kayak rental company on Bearskin Neck

moorings belong to commercial fishermen, but the Harbor Plan does not define what work is classified as fishing. It indicates that there are 100 commercial fishing vessels distributed among the harbors. Diesel fuel is available in Pigeon Cove

Table 10: MA Commercial Fisherman Permits Issued With Vessels Declaring Rockport as Homeport

Year	All Commercial Permits				Lobster Permits			
	Pigeon Cove	Rockport Harbor	Granite Pier	Total	Pigeon Cove	Rockport Harbor	Granite Pier	Total
2000	27	40	5	72	27	35	3	65
2001	27	45	5	77	26	37	5	68
2002	25	49	6	80	24	42	5	71
2003	26	53	6	85	24	42	6	72
2004	26	55	7	88	25	43	6	74
2005	26	53	7	86	24	42	4	70
2006	25	52	7	84	24	45	4	73
2007	24	55	6	85	23	47	4	74
2008	23	50	5	78	22	44	3	69
2009	23	51	5	79	21	38	3	62

Source: MA Dept. of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Permit Database

Table 11: Rockport Landings 2005-2009

Year	Lobsters		All Others		
	Live Lbs.	Dollars	Live Lbs.	Dollars	Total
2005	360,222	\$1,749,404	135,692	\$141,602	\$1,891,006
2006	462,962	\$2,111,613	148,523	\$140,571	\$2,252,184
2007	327,775	\$1,572,901	208,324	\$239,514	\$1,812,415
2008	353,079	\$1,366,652	157,328	\$210,187	\$1,576,839
2009	395,326	\$1,362,977	63,258	\$70,351	\$1,433,328

Source: SAFIS Dealer Reporting Database provided by MA Department of Marine Fisheries

Table 11 tells a somewhat different story. Pounds of lobsters landed increased in general from 2005 to 2009, but the value of the catch declined. For All Other fish landed, the pounds landed declined by half during the period, as did the value of the catch landed. At the same time, the number of commercial boat licenses for All Other fish increased by one, while Lobster boats declined by eight. The number of fish dealers purchasing landings in Rockport went from 13 to 12 during the five-year period. In 2009, seven of those dealers list a Rockport address. These data show

that the industry is fluctuating, but still an important part of the Rockport economy and provides the appearance of a working harbor.

Commercial tour boats operate in Rockport Harbor in the summer, running fishing trips and sailing cruises. Some small boats are available for hire for deep-sea fishing trips. Rockport has a 50' limit on boat length, and the lack of readily available fueling facilities for commercial boats will limit expansion of commercial activities for tourists.



Lobster pots on Bradley Wharf

Two other important tourist activities take place in the Downtown. Sea kayak rentals and tours are available from an outfitter on Bradley Wharf. This activity has increased in popularity. The Rockport Harbor area has important assets for kayak tours including several islands and lighthouses. The Thacher Island Association, a local non-profit, runs power boat trips out to Thacher Island for both day trips and overnight camping. These two seasonal activities have spurred interest from tourists seeking an outdoor experience beyond

the more passive one offered by shops and restaurants.

White Wharf, Bradley Wharf, and Old Harbor, where most of the boat mooring and slips in the Downtown are located, are owned by the Town of Rockport. Efforts were made to develop open space at White Wharf for park activities, but this has not moved forward.

Commercial fishing and other commercial uses on the waterfront provide employment and income for residents and also supply customers to shops and restaurants in Town as they visit Rockport to participate in waterfront activities such as deep-sea fishing. In this way, users of the recreation resources noted in the table below become an important market for many downtown businesses.

Recreation Resources

The Town owns significant public recreation resources in the Downtown area, particularly on Bearskin Neck. Table 12 lists the public spaces in the area and their key characteristics. These public areas, many on the waterfront, are principally for sitting or viewing. There is an active play area at Millbrook Meadow, which is located on the northwest end of the Downtown area. White Wharf is a location where residents can store their kayaks for ready use and there are docks and slips leased for power boats. The Thacher Island Association runs a shuttle service off the end of T-Wharf out to Thacher Island. This is heavily used by Rockporters and some tourists for a half-day trip.



Front Beach

Table 12: Public Recreation Sites in Downtown Rockport

	Location (Map/Lot)	Town Management	Size (Acres)	Facilities
Bearskin Neck				
Sea Fencibles Park	35/3	DPW	0.72	Open area at beginning of White Wharf-picnic area-views
White Wharf		DPW		Wharf with docks for rent, and parking associated with the dock use
Bradley Wharf	36/67B	DPW	0.15	No public access, home of Motif #1
Old Harbor	36/53,36/54	DPW	1.74	Public park w/ benches, parking for residents and fishermen
Seawall and Rocks	36/124	Town	1.5	Limited public access, views
Breakwater	36-78	Town	0.35	Parking, public access near parking area, not on breakwater
Downtown				
Lumber Wharf	35-21E	DPW	0.27	Public access, views
T-Wharf	36/32,36/33	DPW	0.84	Public access, working wharf, views, parking
Millbrook Meadow	18/325	DPW	1.56	Public access, playground, concerts, pond, pathways, limited parking
Front Beach	35/54	DPW	7	Public beach, life guard, toilets, access ramp
Harvey Park	18/475	DPW	0.23	Intown park, benches, public
Barletta Park	18/513A	DPW	0.16	Intown park, benches, public

Source: Rockport Open Space and Recreation Plan 2010

The two harbors within the Downtown area provide moorings for recreational boats, and provide limited locations for launching trailered and car-top boats. The 900 member Sandy Bay Yacht Club leases land on T-Wharf. It has open membership and operates like a community boat club. It runs a sailing school for youth and individual training for adults.

The presence of Front Beach within the Downtown is an important asset that is attractive to tourists staying at nearby motels and Bed and Breakfasts. Few communities can boast a beach in

their downtown. Other key on-water assets are kayak rentals and moorings that allow visitors to get out onto the waters around Cape Ann. These are unique areas in the community.

These publicly-owned resources are particularly attractive to tourists as places to rest, view the ocean and historic properties, eat lunch or ice cream, and generally enjoy the area. Preservation or improvement of these areas is important to provide resources to complement the retail and pedestrian activities that take place in the Downtown. Walking is certainly one of the

primary activities enjoyed by tourists. The condition of sidewalks, addressed earlier, plays an important role in connecting together the many park and park-like areas in the Downtown.

Table 13: Public Buildings in the Downtown

Public Building	Services Available
Town Hall	Pay taxes, building permits, consult with all town staff except for police and DPW facilities management
Police Department Annex	Pay parking tickets
Main Fire Station	Burning permits, primary location for firefighting equipment
Former Granite Savings Bank Building	Recently acquired. To be used during Town Hall repair and possible expansion
Community House	Municipally-owned and under rehabilitation. To be used for the Rockport Senior Center, and leased to a large variety of non-profit organizations
American Legion Building	Municipally-owned but used by the American Legion for meetings and activities
Firehouse Trust Building	
Forest Fire Station (former location)	Located on T-Wharf with Harbormaster's Office and public bathrooms
U.S. Post Office	All post office services
Visitors' Center Kiosk	Located in Barletta Park; seasonal housing literature racks and occasional resource person
Public Library	Full library services, speakers, and programs
High School Apartments	Subsidized housing for seniors

Public Buildings and Properties

Many of the public buildings in Rockport are located in the Historic Downtown Commercial/General Zone. Town-owned property includes several buildings used for Town office purposes, several used by non-profit organizations such as the Firehouse Trust and American Legion, and significant other property as shown on Map 2. Town-owned land consists of waterfront areas and a variety of small parks on individual parcels.

Rockport-owned buildings in the Downtown are listed in Table 13.

Two important decisions were made in 2010 in regard to public buildings. A commitment was made to rehabilitate the Community House for a senior center and meeting space for public and non-profit organizations, and the Town purchased the former Granite Savings Bank building next door to Town Hall.

Using Community Preservation funds, a \$2.2 million rehabilitation of the Community House, completed in late 2010, will protect the building's historic features and assure its use by many residents.

Scout Hall, located just outside the Downtown, also has been a recent beneficiary of Community Preservation funds. These funds, coupled with sweat equity on the part of the scouting groups that use the building, will provide a more comfortable and permanent home for scouting in Rockport, as well as a renovated building for use by other organizations.

The ongoing use and maintenance of public buildings has been the subject of planning over the last ten years. Several documents have reviewed the condition and space in these buildings and their current uses. In some cases, future uses were described and recommended.

Cultural Facilities

Downtown is the location of cultural institutions and businesses that bring vitality to the area. These resources reflect Rockport's history and its character. There are many privately owned art galleries that attract visitors and enhance the appeal and appearance of the Downtown area. The Rockport Art Association (RAA), located on Main Street, displays a permanent collection as well as changing exhibits in several galleries, and offers lectures and many classes that are taught by local artists. The RAA is located in two historic buildings that have recently been renovated with the assistance of Community Preservation funds.

The Shalin Liu Performance Center, new home of Rockport Music, formerly known as the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, opened in June 2010, and is an important addition to the cultural life of Rockport, and also to the North Shore and the Boston area. The building fits into a downtown parcel and has an exterior that recalls the 19th century appearance of its predecessor's design details. The building features a unique performance stage with a wall of glass overlooking Sandy Bay, and it is already a significant attraction.



Rockport Art Association

Rockport Music intends to continue its traditional chamber music series in June and early July, and has begun to expand the season with a new range of performers and performances. The impact of the development of this venue will be felt in the coming years, providing new opportunities for the town to develop programs to take advantage of these changes. In its inaugural year of operation, Rockport Music has several times offered use of its space to the Rockport School for school performances. Rockport Music has worked with the community to develop approaches to parking for the 335 seat venue. Rockport Music has also developed wayfinding signage that may facilitate the Town's efforts to develop signage for other resources.

A number of other venues are found throughout Downtown. Spiran Hall, owned by the Spiran Lodge Vasa Order of America, is used for meetings, a summer movie series, plays, and other performances, in an informal setting. The Unitarian and Congregational churches also sponsor performances. The town's Community House, located on Broadway, provides a home base for many local cultural organizations and is the venue for several theatrical performances throughout the year. Downtown Rockport provides a comfortable home for the arts, and is unique in the region in that respect.

The large number of non-profit organizations, many of them membership-based, provides an important asset for development and revitalization activities in the Downtown area. Rockport has a long tradition of accommodating private non-profits in public space. Considering this, perhaps new partnerships and approaches could be developed to fully realize the benefits that the community organizations bring into the mix.

Consolidated Recommendations

I. Preserve the historic character of Rockport

1. WORK WITH THE ROCKPORT HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO DEVELOP DESIGN GUIDELINES TO ASSURE PRESERVATION.

Rockport's important collection of 19th century residential and commercial buildings downtown is a primary attraction to the area for visitors, and one of the most important amenities for residents. Quality of life and economic reasons make it important to protect the historic appearance of the entire town. In the fall of 2010, teardowns and major modifications continue apace, with downtown losing some critical properties. Rockport is fortunate to have headquartered in the area several banks whose officers understand and are committed to local lending. This enhances the possibility of obtaining financing for the rehabilitation of historic properties.

The Historical Commission (HC) is currently drafting guidelines for properties within Rockport's three local historic districts (shown on Map 3). Historical Commission design guidelines can include provisions to continue use of materials and maintain design features consistent with historic character. Guidelines should specify which buildings within the local historic districts, and within the downtown overall, should adhere to the guidelines. Town by-laws could also designate an entity to apply these guidelines in areas of town outside the historic districts. Guidelines for non-historic properties would be somewhat different, and could be assembled by the Planning Board or a consultant.

Action Items:

a. Complete the Design Guidelines currently in draft form by spring 2011.

The HC should utilize resources necessary to complete the guidelines during winter and spring of 2011, and adopt the Design Guidelines in an expedited timeframe.

b. Prepare a summary of the HC Design Guidelines and make it available to all property owners within the downtown.

While much of downtown is included in Local Historic Districts (LHD) with design review by the HC, some significant historic properties are not covered by HC review. The HC Design Guidelines can be developed into a brochure that is available to all owners of historic properties throughout the remainder of the downtown outside the Historic Districts, as well as town-wide. Rehabilitation projects can inadvertently destroy historic features if property owners are unaware of ways to

accomplish historic rehabilitation compatible with historic values. The brochure, made available in Town Hall, through the HC, and through realtors and other sources, can provide key information for property owners on how to rehabilitate their historic properties in ways compatible with HC guidelines. This effort could be undertaken with grant or administrative funding through the Community Preservation Committee. Projects within the LHDs will be reviewed based on these guidelines, and property owners outside the LHDs, if they choose to do so, can use the guidelines to assist them in undertaking renovations that are consistent with the historic qualities of their buildings,.

c. Amend zoning to reduce architectural changes inconsistent with historically-important features.

Amendments to the provisions of the General Zone for the downtown can be used to protect the historic features of the downtown buildings. This Action Item is also discussed in I.5.a. Specific zoning changes that need to be incorporated include reduction in the size and configuration of dormers (through definition of floor area allowed in a half story and restrictions on dormer roof angles), setbacks, uses, uses allowed in front and side yards, and limitations on exterior stairs and decks. This new effort would require the work of the Board of Appeals and Planning Board, in concert with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), a State agency, to amend the zoning by-laws. Work by the MAPC is already underway and could be brought to Town Meeting in 2011.

d. Improve the Historical Commission's ability to protect historic resources in downtown Rockport.

The Historical Commission should review its annual workload and its ability to provide thorough and timely review of requests for work or alterations on historic buildings. HC



Dormers on a house in Rockport

activities should include the development of design guidelines and other regulatory or guidance mechanisms that are instrumental in protecting historic resources in town. If it is demonstrated that the HC needs assistance, the Commission could apply for Community Preservation funds on an annual basis to cover the costs of professional assistance in review of projects and in preparation of decision documents for the Commission.

2. ASSIST RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY OWNERS WITH FUNDING FOR HISTORIC REHABILITATION.

The 2000 U.S. Census indicated that almost half of the residents of downtown Rockport were of low and moderate income (LMI) (household incomes of less than 80% of median income for the region - \$73,440 in 2011). These LMI single- and multi-family homeowners may well need financial assistance to rehabilitate their historic properties. The Community Development Block Grant Small Cities Program makes funds available to towns to lend out for rehabilitation of residential properties, and requires compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for historic rehabilitation. This source of



Historic duplex in Rockport

funding should be explored.

In 2010 a homeowner of an historic building in downtown Rockport approached the Community Preservation Committee with a request for financial assistance to undertake a necessary repair on the property, understanding that this

would use CP funds to rehabilitate historic assets. CP funding is not geared to small individual projects, and although the funds were not granted in this instance, the request is an example of the need for financial assistance for rehabilitation of historic properties in the downtown.

Action Items:

a. Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for housing rehabilitation in the downtown area.

In 2010, funds have already been made available to the Rockport Housing Partnership for development of programs to achieve affordable housing objectives. Because these are federal funds, all rehabilitation on historic properties must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for historic rehabilitation. Such rehabilitation efforts can also assist with the removal of lead paint. Existing CP funds for consulting services allocated to the Rockport Housing Partnership could be used to prepare the application for CDBG funding. Rockport could then complement these funds to allow further rehabilitation on historic features for particularly worthy projects, to purchase a historic façade restriction as part of the rehabilitation of the building, or to acquire a deed restriction assuring

affordability in perpetuity. Detailed specific program design can be developed in the spring of 2011 for submission in the fall of 2011.

b. Inform local banks of Rockport's increased emphasis on maintaining historically important properties.

Bank officials in several of the banks with headquarters on Cape Ann have been involved in lending to local businesses and residential properties. These lenders are aware of the importance of historic properties, and have participated in programs to support community goals. Local officials and HC members can prepare summary information on the Town's historic assets, and through literature and speaking engagements, inform bank officials of the important role that local lending plays in protection and restoration of historic properties.

3. COMPLETE HISTORIC PROPERTY SURVEYS FOR BEARSKIN NECK, AND DESIGNATE BEARSKIN NECK AS PART OF ONE OF THE EXISTING LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS.

The Historical Commission has had a consultant prepare historic property surveys for 50 properties on Bearskin Neck in preparation for adding Bearskin Neck to one of the abutting local

historic districts. The completion of this work will add an important and historically significant downtown neighborhood to the jurisdiction of the HC.

Action Item:

a. Apply for Community Preservation Funds to complete the local historic district designation for Bearskin Neck.

The Historical Commission led the effort to have Historic Property surveys prepared for 50 properties on Bearskin Neck. These properties

can be the core for a proposal to extend the Main Street or Mt. Pleasant Street Local Historic District (LHD). The rest of the properties within Bearskin Neck should be inventoried, including the wharves, the breakwater, and other historic infrastructure. The nomination should include all of the

historic features on the Neck, including Town-owned. The extension of a local district requires review and determination of completeness by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), but does not require MHC approval to implement at the local level. A

LHD does require approval by Town Meeting. The survey work on Bearskin Neck should be completed, and the process for extending the LHD, including public hearings, prior to Town Meeting presentation, should begin.

4. PROTECT HISTORIC RESOURCES IN ROCKPORT FROM TEARDOWNS.

Demolitions appear to have increased in 2009 and 2010, particularly along the waterfront. In some cases, the demolished homes have had historic value, and in other cases they have not. The building stock within the downtown is aging, making it increasingly subject to demolition. Buildings have been lost on Main Street and on the waterfront; another is soon to be lost on

Bearskin Neck. In most cases, the buildings had seriously deteriorated and there were few historic features to save. Given the many historic resources on the waterfront and the demand for waterfront properties, it is wise to have the tool of demolition delay available to allow sufficient time to encourage protection of that which is worth saving.

Action Item:

a. Develop and pass a demolition delay by-law.

Many communities in the area have adopted a demolition delay by-law, providing a number of models to study. The Historical Commission could partner with the Planning Board and the Building Inspector to work on this, or it could become a project for a consultant available to the Historical Commission and funded with CP

funds. It might be advisable to consider the demolition delay by-law at the same time as potential rezoning in the downtown and the inclusion of Bearskin Neck in a LHD. This coordination would enhance the Town's ability to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of demolition.

5. USE ELEMENTS OF THE ZONING BY-LAW TO ASSIST IN THE PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORIC QUALITY OF THE BUILDINGS AND STREETScape.

The Zoning By-laws and the General Zone section in particular encourage / allow / restrict redevelopment, making it consistent with the Town's recent development pattern and features. Currently, elements of the by-law encourage development that is inconsistent with historic patterns of development and historic features of

buildings. For example, current zoning requires setbacks, but the historic pattern was development abutting the public right-of-way; current zoning allows construction of large dormers that are inconsistent with the historic pattern of small, defined dormers, or of no dormers at all.

Action Item:

a. Review General Zone provisions for the downtown area and recommend changes to encourage/require development more consistent with historic development styles and patterns.

The Planning Board in mid-2010 called on the MAPC to review the provisions of the General

Zone and draft appropriate changes. Recommended changes included reducing front and side yard setbacks, changing the definition of a half-story, and considering development of design guidelines. It was suggested that eligible uses could be restricted to those that make sense in the

downtown area. This work should be completed and proposed changes put in the

form of warrant articles for Town Meeting in 2011.

6. EMPHASIZE THE AREA’S KEY HISTORIC FEATURES ON WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES DESIGNED TO SERVE VISITORS, AND MAKE THE RESOURCES VISIBLE WITHIN THE TOWN.

The Cape Ann area has an extraordinary concentration of valuable attractions—access to natural, historic, art, and cultural resources. Tourism is critical to the area’s economy. Tourists now obtain most information from websites. Information on Cape Ann is primarily provided by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce’s site, and Gloucester has two additional sites principally for information on Gloucester. Most websites are effective in listing service providers, businesses, or

institutions, but provide only passing reference to beaches and other recreational attractions, and historic features. Positioning the Rockport area for visitors with specific interests could promote longer stays as visitors pursue their niche interests. This effort would require review of tourist resources and collaboration among the various entities providing information on the area and its particular niche attractions, including historic resources.

Action Item:

- a. **Develop a coordinated approach to visitor information about the Cape Ann area. Feature unique resources to attract niche visitors, including those with interest in period architecture, historic landscapes such as the quarries, early industry and related built infrastructure such as the Granite Bridge, downtown piers, the Mill Dam, and remnants of quarrying operations at Halibut Point.**

Entities involved in promoting tourism on Cape Ann, including the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, Seaport Gloucester Destination Marketing Organization, the Gloucester Tourism Commission, and others, should get together to evaluate their individual websites and printed materials in order to identify key information gaps and key opportunities to coordinate information for potential visitors. The Historical Commissions and Societies in the area should be included to ensure that the materials adequately present the significant historic resources. In short, they should develop a joint strategic marketing plan (such as the Gloucester Harbor Economic Development Plan prepared by Mt. Auburn Associates). From this effort could emerge a single comprehensive website providing

attractive, easily accessed information. The site’s narrative could relate key development stages and stories in the area’s history, and identify historic resources and their unique features. The focus would be different from a city or Chamber of Commerce website, which has specific objectives, many of them commercial.

- b. **Develop programs to identify buildings and built features that are of historic significance, and recognize the owners that have been instrumental in preservation.**

Participants in workshops that were part of the master planning process indicated that the Town could benefit from a plaque program that identified the historic buildings in the downtown, indicating information about the original owner/builder and the date or period of construction. It was also noted that individuals, families, or businesses that had been instrumental in the preservation or restoration of historic resources could be recognized through the establishment of an annual award or similar recognition. Both of these activities are most often undertaken by the local historical society—in this case the Sandy Bay Historical Society. Rockport has

many worthy properties and many worthy friends of historic properties and the Historical Society would be an appropriate entity to

undertake these efforts. There are numerous models in the area to provide program design.

II. Improve Housing Conditions and Access

1. TAKE ON ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES.

The information provided in the baseline portion of this Master Plan shows that the number of condominiums on the market in the downtown has increased significantly in recent years. In general, the condominium units were rental apartments before conversion. Increased home ownership in downtown could benefit the community with more residents invested in their properties, but could also remove important short-term

and entry-level housing from the market. While mixed uses including first floor commercial and upper story residential are common, they are not explicitly allowed under current zoning. Mixed uses allow lower cost housing for store owners and multiple sources of income for building owners. Further exploration of these issues, with recommendations to support what is best for the town, are desirable.

Action Items:

a. Assess whether the conversion of rental units to condominiums is beneficial to the downtown and its residents.

Rockport can review the impact of condominium conversion on the Town, considering changes in taxes, property maintenance, and cost of living. This information can advise the Town on how to target future housing assistance programs. The Rockport Housing Partnership currently has funds to study housing needs in Rockport and to develop programs with CP funds to assist affordable and middle income housing. Questions regarding the impact of condominiums could be included in the scope of services for the consultant hired by the Rockport Housing Partnership.

b. Incorporate mixed-use options into the General zone and into the Semi-Residential and Residential zones.

These amendments to the Zoning By-law will allow housing units to be mixed with commercial activities for new construction buildings and for changes in use. These could

be designed to allow live/work spaces if appropriate. Exploration of these issues in the work now underway by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on improving zoning provisions in the General zone in the



Retail and mixed-use buildings in Rockport

downtown, or it could be added as an agenda item to the Planning Board for study in a later effort.

2. DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT AND EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE DOWNTOWN.

As noted earlier, about 50% of downtown residences are owned or occupied by low and moderate income residents, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Considering this statistic, along with the large number of historic properties owned or

tenanted by that population, it may be that significant numbers of owners do not have sufficient financial resources for adequate maintenance and rehabilitation of their buildings.

Action Items:

a. Develop a program to fund rehabilitation of downtown housing units by low/moderate income residents or tenants.

The Rockport Housing Partnership has consulting resources and has expressed interest in preparing an application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. These funds would support housing rehabilitation by low/moderate income residents who live in the downtown area in homes in need of critical repairs, such as removal of lead paint. CDBG funds are deferred payment, 0% interest loans requiring a modest match. The loans are designed to address building code problems that often include exterior work on the building. Because these are federal funds, all work on historic properties must be in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for historic rehabilitation. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) prefers to target these funds to specific areas of a community—the downtown as defined in this Master Plan is a particularly appropriate area to target. Rockport has been assigned a high "needs" score by DHCD, an important

factor in making the Town more competitive for these grants.

b. Augment CDBG funds with Community Preservation funds to achieve rehabilitation of historic properties and assure the long term affordability of units.

Community Preservation funds can be used to assist private property owners if the work qualifies under the Community Preservation Act, the public benefit is appropriate for the level of investment, and the work is secured in a deed restriction or façade restriction. It is possible to use CP funds in coordination with CDBG funds to buy a deed restriction to assure affordability in perpetuity, or to undertake façade improvements on a historic building such as rehabilitation of critical architectural features. Planning for a stand-alone or complementary program to CDBG housing rehabilitation could provide important historical resources for the preservation of the downtown's architectural features. Collaboration of the Historical Commission and the Housing Partnership would be required to design and develop such a program.

III. Improve Services and Information for Seasonal Visitors to Rockport

Background information developed for this Master Plan identified the important role visitor-related businesses play in the Rockport economy, in both employment and sales. Employees and businesses in the hospitality industry comprise the

largest segment of the Town's economic activity. Second-home residents as well as visitors spend considerable consumer dollars at local businesses, assuring the ongoing availability of key services to Town residents year-round. Visitors are an

important element in what makes Rockport viable, and improving services to maintain their interest and convenience creates employment and

income, assures services to local residents, and benefits the community.

1. COORDINATE VISITOR SERVICES/INTERESTS.

Development of the Downtown Master Plan exposed gaps in the availability and accessibility of information to assist visitors in finding their way around Rockport. As part of the master planning process, targeted meetings on parking, on issues

identified by hotel/inn managers, and on concerns of retail business owners, very clearly highlighted several needs. The recommendations below outline new resources that would close two critical gaps: signage and visitor information.

Action Items:

a. Develop a wayfinding program that includes identifier locations, sign design and content, and funds for fabrication and installation.

The Planning Board has begun discussion of wayfinding signage, but it is clear the assistance of an environmental design firm will be necessary if the desired result is to be achieved. Outside funding for design and fabrication is scarce. Defining the scope and specifics of a sign program could be undertaken by the Economic Development Committee (EDC), a committee of volunteers appointed by the Board of Selectmen, or by the Rockport division of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. Initial preparation for a funding application would require identification of important attractions, signs to find them, and directions to parking. The Essex Heritage Scenic Byway, an initiative of the Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC), has prepared prototype sign designs for the Byway route consistent with regional signs adopted in other parts of the State. Rockport is a participant in the local planning for the Scenic Byway. This program might offer funding assistance for a wayfinding sign program for the Town. If initial planning efforts are undertaken by Rockport utilizing the sign designs prepared by ENHC, Rockport could apply in the fall of 2011 for assistance from the Downtown Initiative Program through the Department of Housing and Community Development to identify sign locations and prepare final designs. Further

effort would then be required to identify funding for fabrication.

b. Develop a program of interpretive signage: select buildings, areas, and events to be interpreted, develop the narrative, and design and locate the signs.

Rockport has many historic resources—buildings, interesting sites, wharves, and other granite features—that reflect the Town's granite quarrying history. Interpretative information is largely unavailable to visitors because local history is seldom described in brochures (see recommendation I.6.a) and there are few historic markers. Interpretative signage would give visitors a connection of past to present, increasing their understanding of what they are seeing and adding to the enjoyment of their visit. A committee to develop wayfinding signage could also develop and design interpretive signs; members of the Sandy Bay Historical Society might be recruited as knowledgeable participants. Perhaps as part of a history class project, high school students could research events important in Rockport's history. As in a wayfinding program, assistance from a professional environmental designer will be required. Sign topics, locations, and narratives should be developed before funding for production and installation is sought. The use of a public relations firm or students savvy in social media could be very helpful in this effort. Transportation Enhancement grants is one option for funding. Eligibility for

Community Preservation funds could be explored.

c. Develop audio walking tours.

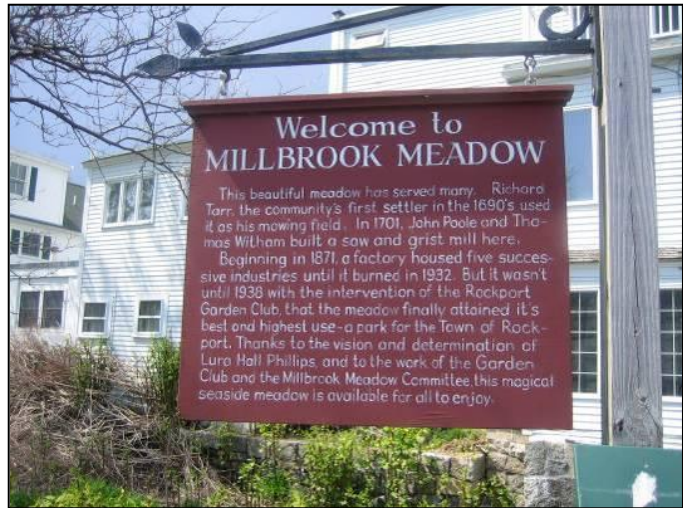
One option for enriching the experience of Rockport's extensive and interesting history for visitors is the use of audio equipment for a walking tour. Sites and buildings would need to be signed, and an audio narrative developed to relate information about each marked site. A fee would be charged to cover the cost of equipment and management staff. Locations for distribution of equipment and maps would need to be determined. Such tours are most effective in places like Rockport, where the sites of interest are located within a short walking distance of each other.

d. Integrate Quick Response (QR) Codes into the development of information for tourists

QR codes are the small black and white squares that can be included on signs to provide links to websites, videos, maps, photo galleries, and other on-line information. Visitors with a camera phone equipped with a reader application can scan the image of the QR Code to display text, contact information, connect to a wireless network, or open a web page in the phone's browser. A common application for tourism is the inclusion of QR codes on signs or brochures to provide additional information; for example, a brochure of lodging facilities could include QR codes to allow users to visit the web pages of each facility. The use of QR codes can be integrated into the development of signage and brochures to enhance the visitor's experience and convenience.

e. Collect information on the interests of new user groups in downtown.

Rockport Music's Shalin Liu Performance Center, a new venue for a variety of cultural events year-round, has begun to attract a large number of first-time visitors to Rockport. The Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Board, Rockport Music, or a similar entity,



Interpretive sign at Millbrook Meadow

could develop a simple survey for attendees. Survey questions could be formulated to identify other activities that were part of a visitor's stay, and solicit feedback about interaction with Town amenities such as parking. Concerts/events could be selected in both the high season and shoulder seasons when other Town resources and activities vary. The assistance and potential leadership of Rockport Music would be critical to produce data of significant value to both Rockport Music and the Town.

f. Identify key gaps in visitor services.

Several meetings held with residents as part of the master planning process identified gaps in visitor services. Availability of parking and restrooms were two of the more obvious. It was also noted that there is no dining option for visitors arriving at an accommodation later in the evening, including during the high season. The survey mentioned above in III.1.e could assist in identifying additional gaps. The groups mentioned in earlier recommendations—the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Committee—could investigate gaps and work to address them. The ultimate goal of the effort to identify gaps is to fill them. One gap mentioned often was the restaurant hours

and the need for restaurants open year-round.

g. Initiate visits to Rockport by cruise ships

Rockport has some potential to attract small cruise ships. Efforts should be made to contact

cruise companies, understand their requirements for landing and for services and facilities. Prepare Rockport merchants to understand the interests and requirements of cruise ship patrons. Provide information to cruisers through local and regional websites.

IV. Enhance Cultural Resources for Residents and Visitors

1. IMPROVE SCHEDULING AND COMMUNICATION AMONG EVENT PLANNERS.

Many downtown improvements focused on visitors' interests and needs will also benefit Rockport residents, such as an increase in the number of stores, restaurants, and cultural attractions. The recent opening of the Shalin Liu Performance Center, coupled with renovation of

the Community House, expands venue opportunities. There will likely be an increase in the number of events and organizations sponsoring them. Coordination of event scheduling will reduce conflicting dates that result in competition for audience.

Action Item:

a. Coordinate scheduling and publicity for cultural events.

Determine a lead organization (Chamber of Commerce or a cultural organization) to maintain a calendar of events including all of the cultural organizations in Town. Sharing proposed schedules with all other sponsoring organizations can reduce conflicting dates and encourage activities to build on each other's success. The calendar might be a simple

scheduling spreadsheet with regular additions and updates, accessible electronically by all participating organizations for themselves and their visitors.

Agreement on design, tracking procedures, and coordination of responsibilities among all the involved organizations is key to the success of this project. A central, designated manager of such a calendar of events would be most desirable but will require funding.

V. Improve Economic Activity/Viability of Rockport's Downtown

Rockport has initiated a substantial effort to evaluate its economy and carry out recommendations. Two significant recommendations proposed in an economic development study undertaken in the mid-1990s (Focus Rockport, coordinated by Edward Moscovitch, 1995) have been adopted, resulting in the hiring of a Town Administrator, followed by voters' approval, in a town election ten years later, of limited alcohol sales in Rockport restaurants. The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce maintains a presence in Rockport and provides

some economic development support, particularly for its member businesses. The Town's Economic Development Committee, composed of appointed volunteers, is currently poised to take a more active role. In recent years, several traditional Rockport events, organized by a core of active Rockport volunteers, have attracted increasingly larger numbers of residents and visitors.

Several new facilities in Rockport that will enhance economic opportunities in the tourism sector and can provide professional staff to

collaborate on economic development efforts. The Shalin Liu Performance Center, a new player in downtown Rockport, has become an important partner in attracting visitors and visitor services. Since its opening in June 2010, businesses have increasingly taken advantage of this new asset. The extensive renovation of what is now named the Rockport Inn and Suites provides a large, modern lodging facility with 79 rooms just outside the downtown area. This facility accommodates visitors to Rockport who seek a modern, fully handicapped accessible motel setting.

Finding available land or facilities in Rockport for business activities other than retail is a challenge.

Zoning allows offices in downtown buildings, and they are currently found on Broadway, Railroad Avenue, and Main Street, as well as side streets. There is also 12,785 sf of office space above the currently vacant grocery store in the Whistlestop Mall on Railroad Avenue. Rockport lacks land for industrial or large commercial facilities that need unobtrusive yet accessible sites. Maintaining businesses in the downtown in a relatively isolated seasonal community like Rockport is an ongoing challenge. Keeping commercial property in commercial uses and preventing first-floor conversions to housing is also a challenge.

1. ORGANIZE TO UNDERTAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Rockport has several standing organizations working to undertake economic development planning and implementation. To execute initiatives recommended in this Plan, as well as those identified in their individual work plans,

each organization will need to define and agree to specific responsibilities. Coordination with organizations in other Cape Ann communities will be very important.

Action Items:

a. Develop a leadership team to study and undertake business development in Rockport, and implement recommendations.

Rockport needs an entity or working group to address merchant needs in the downtown area. This work might entail development of information to provide a full understanding of the economic issues in the Downtown; coordination of merchant activities for mutual benefit, such as common opening and closing times, and identification of designated areas for employee parking; development of an inventory of land resources available for location or expansion of businesses; and identification and recruitment of businesses likely to be successful in Rockport. This work is often undertaken by a merchants' organization, chamber of commerce, or local or regional economic development entity.

b. Coordinate and enhance local efforts for economic development.

Commerce could initiate a series of broad-based meetings to discuss economic development issues and initiatives for Rockport and for the greater Cape Ann area, as noted above and elsewhere in this Plan. This series of meetings could identify problems and opportunities, review the content of this Plan and other referenced plans that have addressed economic development in the region, identify the particular strengths and resources of each entity, and develop lists of initiatives for each entity to undertake. The need for additional resources and expertise could then be identified. This effort should include assignment of responsibility to the various participants for implementation of the recommendations. Such an effort could result in the development of a leadership entity or team as recommended in item 1.a. above.

2. ANALYZE THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS MIX; CONSIDER GENERAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS, AND CONSIDER A BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RETENTION EFFORT.

This planning document initiated a look at businesses in the Downtown and their importance as providers of local employment and services to visitors and residents. Downtown commercial real estate is subject to recurring vacancies as businesses go in and out of operation; this presents a challenge to neighboring merchants. The mix of businesses can act as an important incentive, drawing

shoppers beyond an empty storefront. Keeping an adequate density of clustered businesses to maintain visitor interest is essential. For example, if there is a decline in the cluster of art galleries, visitors interested in art may no longer come to Rockport. Elsewhere, workshops with the participation of business owners have shown business retention efforts to be beneficial.

Action Items:

a. Analyze store front vacancies.

Working with Rockport realtors and local businesses, examine where vacancies have occurred over the last five years, property by property, to identify patterns of turnover and vacancies to be expected in a small, seasonal town a distance from a main highway. Size and location of units, typical tenants, rent, and possible impact on abutters is useful information. It would also be useful to identify opportunities for reconfiguring space, grouping businesses, changing landscaping, making sign improvements, or street reconfiguration, to assist in marketing the space.

b. Prepare information for realtors to use in marketing commercial space.

As part of the overall efforts of this section, the Economic Development Committee (EDC) could develop relationships with realtors who market commercial properties in a wide geographic area. The EDC could provide information in an electronic format readily available for answering inquiries and conveniently linked to business development websites. Such information could summarize the Town's amenities, the number of visitors per year, the seasonal cycles, special events and festivals, a listing of businesses, or other similar information.

c. The Economic Development Committee could meet with local businesses to develop strategies for increasing local employment.

During the public workshops held to gather input for this Plan, it was suggested that steps could be taken to prepare young residents for seasonal and part-time employment, thereby developing a trained pool of young workers and giving business owners a viable local choice for hiring staff. Training and support could perhaps be provided by Rockport High School. A complementary initiative to encourage Rockport residents to patronize local businesses could increase demand for personnel and improve the job market. Rockport businesses, job-seekers, and consumers would all benefit from this strategy.

d. Develop procedures to improve methods for lengthening the season for visitors in Rockport.

Rockport has developed an impressive array of events that stretch the "visitor season" beyond the summer months. Events that take advantage of spring and fall tour boat excursions from neighboring Gloucester, fall "leaf peeper" bus tours, Christmas season events, and arrival of good weather in spring all attract visitors. Many Rockport merchants have adapted to a longer business season. Businesses may find it productive to expand

their offerings into shoulder seasons by varying their merchandise and adjusting their advertising strategy. Is there business support for lengthening the season, and an understanding of what that means to the business? Some businesses, such as hotels and inns, may be aligned with year-round

businesses in Gloucester. Others depend on significant online sales. Data collection for this effort should be included as part of recommendation 1.b. above. Such an approach could also investigate liberalization of alcohol regulations to encourage additional year-round restaurants.

3. EXPLORE POSSIBLE ROLES FOR THE TOWN, ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, OR THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, IN SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL FISHING.

The City of Gloucester recently completed the Gloucester Harbor Economic Development Plan (Mt. Auburn Associates). The Plan describes a variety of issues within the fishing industry in which the City can participate and have an influence. The report recognizes the City's efforts to reconstitute a Fisheries Commission, and recommends that the Commission be staffed with administrative support. The plan goes further to recommend a Maritime Industry Development Unit within the Community Development Department. This unit could market Gloucester

resources for fishing industry businesses. The Rockport fishing industry (mostly lobster landings) and Gloucester's are integrated, selling to the same wholesalers and with fishermen of one community fishing out of the other's harbors. It is a logical extension that Rockport would want to be part of discussions and make information available on its resources in conjunction with the City's efforts. Rockport's catch of lobster and groundfish is sold through Gloucester wholesalers and processors so there is a direct interest in cooperation to improve overall functioning.

Action Item:

a. The Rockport Economic Development Committee (EDC) and/or Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce could initiate contact and coordinate with economic development activities in Gloucester.

Rockport could begin a dialogue with Gloucester about Gloucester's initiatives, exploring how Rockport could participate in and benefit from such efforts, including discussion of cost-sharing if appropriate. This initiative would begin with

meetings and exploration of possibilities, but could evolve into things more substantive. The EDC may find that review of the economic connections between Rockport and Gloucester could lead to a better understanding of the economic conditions in Rockport, leading to collaboration on a number of economic development activities with efforts made to begin implementation of the most beneficial collaborations.

4. DEVELOP ECOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES SUCH AS BIRD WATCHING, NATURE VIEWING, HIKING, AND WATER RECREATION.

Rockport has many tracts of open land owned and managed by the Town. In addition, land is owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, Massachusetts Department of Conservation, Essex County Greenbelt, and the Trustees of Reservations. Some of these lands are in the downtown area,

near downtown, and on off-shore island sites accessible by kayaks, power boats, and by the Thacher Island Association launch that leaves regularly in summertime from downtown. Additional places for water-based recreation exist just outside the downtown, with opportunities to launch hand-carried boats at Granite Pier and

elsewhere. Dogtown hiking trails add to the diversity of opportunities that make Rockport attractive to eco-tourists. Marketing ecotourism may be more effective if approached on a regional level. For example, birdwatchers could be

provided information on viewing areas throughout the Cape Ann area—comprehensive information that would make a visit to the area more compelling.

Action Items:

a. Gather a group to develop a Rockport identity with resources for ecotourism.

A group knowledgeable about Rockport's natural attractions and options for accessing and using these attractions could gather information of interest to eco-tourists. These efforts would help visitors identify the nature and value of the ecological resources. Data should include information about access, identifying limitations to access that the group might study for possible modification. One limitation to accessibility is the cost to launch hand-carried boats at Granite Pier, and the lack of parking for visitors who seek to launch hand-carried boats elsewhere in Town. The Ecotourism group could methodically address these issues, and also develop better informational sources for all ecotourism opportunities in Rockport. In the short run, information could be included on the Rockport section of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce website; a comprehensive and coordinated source could be developed over time. This effort might prove most effective when regional information is provided to visitors. The ultimate goal should be reliable, useful, comprehensive descriptions of local ecology, including available access and regional locations for further information.

b. Develop user information for ecotourism activities.

The group recruited in V.4.a. above, or another appropriate group, could identify the needs of eco-tourists. Members of the Thacher Island Association and businesses dependent on ecotourism would be likely participants. This group would evaluate specific services required by visitors who want



Thacher Island excursion boat

to participate in these activities. The group could then develop recommendations detailing suggestions to enhance ecotourism. Recommendations might cover a wide range, from locations to buy food or gear to names of inns and motels providing storage for boats or bicycles. This information would then be packaged with the information developed in V.4.a. to provide a complete package of both ecological resources and service resources. Local businesses could add discounts on services or products particularly attractive to eco-minded tourists.

Information and access to environmental experiences should also be detailed on the Chamber of Commerce website and on printed brochures available at Visitors' Centers. Collaboration with Essex and Gloucester could be pursued. This initiative would lead to an increase in visitors as Rockport becomes known for its many opportunities for participation in a wide variety of nature activities. Advertisements, in

coordination with other Cape Ann communities, could be placed in the Appalachian Mountain Club magazine, Atlantic Coastal Kayaker, and similar special interest magazines and websites.

c. Develop comprehensive literature for specific activities.

Develop written materials for specific ecotourism activities, including all necessary details as described above, to allow visitors to

take advantage of ecotourism opportunities in Town. One example might be a brochure on kayaking in Rockport, or on wider Cape Ann. This brochure could include information developed by the State, with maps about launch areas, including tide information and limitations, a list of outfitters, parking areas near launch sites, sources of lunch foods and other provisions, and restaurants and lodging to accommodate people in casual clothing or with resources to store kayaks.

5. REVIEW THE KEY NATURAL FEATURES IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND IDENTIFY WAYS THAT ACCESS, USE, AND PROTECTION OF THESE RESOURCES CAN BE ENHANCED.

As this Plan indicates, Downtown Rockport has many starting points for walking trails, beaches, and historic sites for viewing the water. Among them are White Wharf, T Wharf, Lumber Wharf, and the Bearskin Neck breakwater. Rockport has made efforts to identify these locations on maps, and provides benches and restroom facilities.

Action Item:

a. Improve facilities on Downtown ecotourism sites.

Over the years, proposals have been made for physical improvements to Rockport's ecotourism sites. At White Wharf, schemes to improve access to the water and to the wharf have been explored. Improving the appearance and size of the kayak racks would increase usage, as well as produce revenue. Picnic tables, including those that are handicapped accessible, would make it clear that White Wharf welcomes all as a recreational site. At all locations, interpretive signs could describe important historic and natural features. Improved signage and inviting facilities for rest or picnicking will increase usage and enjoyment by the public. Such facilities can be considered in the context of streetscape plans and infrastructure improvements recommended elsewhere in this Plan.



Sign at Sea Fencibles Park

6. CONTINUE EFFORTS TO MAKE THE MBTA STATION AREA AN ECONOMIC ASSET FOR ROCKPORT.

The Town has spent significant time and effort attempting to improve the asset that is the MBTA Station area. This includes many years of work to keep the MBTA “on track” toward promised redevelopment of the station and parking lot. The MBTA Station Area Plan prepared in 2006 in partnership with interested Rockport residents suggested a

range of options to improve the function and appearance of the area, and provided several concepts for redevelopment, including improvements to landscaping, pedestrian use and access, the MBTA/Town parking lot, and access to Evans Field. Some of the following recommendations summarize the content of that report.

Action Items:

a. Work with new development within the MBTA Station area to achieve some of the goals of the Plan.

Town Boards and Commissions reviewing proposed development within the MBTA area could encourage or require implementation of the Plan recommendations. Such features can include landscaping, pedestrian access, improvement of infrastructure, and similar options. The content of the MBTA Area Plan can be made available to potential developers so they are aware of the background for the design requirements.



Rockport MBTA Station

b. Continue to consider redevelopment options in the MBTA Station area.

As the uses at the MBTA Station area change over time, coupled with the proposed improvements in noise reduction from train engine warm-up, opportunity expands for redevelopment of some parcels for multi-family housing. The Planning Board and other Town officials could initiate conversation with the property owner regarding development at the site that could result in redevelopment of the area. Zoning changes should be considered for their potential impact on development opportunities in the area.

c. Develop methods to encourage private cleaning and building maintenance that will enhance the appearance of the area.

One of the chief attractions of Rockport is the effort of residents to make the town look cared-for and well-maintained. This is most apparent in the profusion of flowers throughout the growing season, and the generally well-maintained yards. Some of the businesses in the MBTA area and elsewhere in downtown would benefit from more attention paid to the appearance of their property. The Rockport Inn and Suites made a significant improvement by changing a tired facility into an attractive regional resource, and could be used as a model for other businesses.

Attention to building design, maintenance, external amenities such as benches and trash cans, exterior lights that conform to the Town's lighting by-law, and appropriate landscaping, all contribute to the Town's appearance. An initiative from the Chamber of Commerce is often a successful way to raise awareness of these issues.

d. Continue the important advocacy for and design review of the MBTA Station improvements.

The Committee working on this project has made important contributions to the design of the station thus far. Their work needs to

continue, providing broad perspective on proposed design features. Adequate station parking is critically important not only to Rockport's residents, but also to visitors who are rail travelers. The parking lot can be used by visitors during major Town events and could be an asset to business activities. The Town and MBTA Committee should continue to advocate for the key features the Town has requested but that have not yet been included, among them an information kiosk, public restrooms, an adequate covered area for bicycle parking, and lights that conform to Rockport's lighting by-law.

VI. Improve the Appearance, Use, and Viability of Town Government and Town Buildings

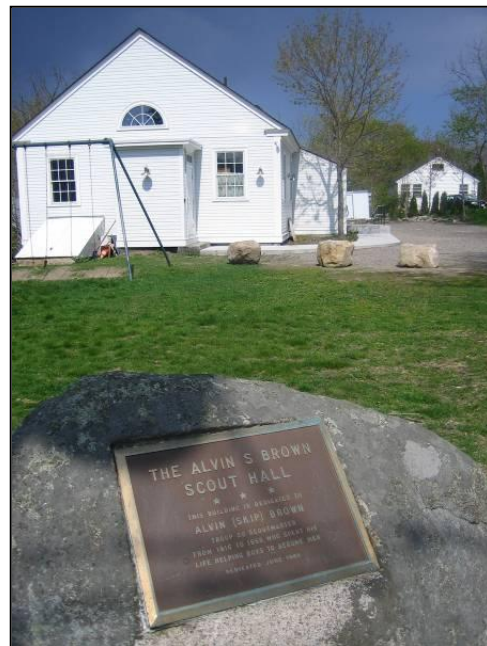
The Town of Rockport owns a number of buildings in the downtown area. Most house Town offices (with the exception of the Police Department, some DPW departments, and one of two fire stations). The downtown location is easily accessible for residents, facilitating direct communication with town officials and employees for services.

Some of the publicly-owned buildings provide meeting space for non-profit organizations that pay rent or have leases for use of the buildings. Table 13 lists the Town-owned buildings and their uses. These organizations provide valuable enriching opportunities to town residents.

Rockport needs to plan for the goals, uses, revenue, and expenses of these key municipal properties. The buildings need to be managed to assure maintenance, preserve their historic architectural features, and produce a mix of revenue and/or public investment to keep them in operation. A thorough planning process may result in some buildings being considered for sale.

Planning documents prepared in the late 1990's laid out proposed improvements for many of the publicly-owned buildings. The recommendations in this Plan incorporate those earlier

recommendations that have not yet been resolved.



Scout Hall

1. SUPPORT THE TOWN'S MANY NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

The many non-profit organizations in Rockport contribute substantially to the quality of life in Town, for both members of the organizations and for residents who benefit from or participate in cultural presentations and fundraising events. Keeping these organizations active and viable is of benefit for the entire town, making Rockport a

lively and interesting place with a strong sense of community. Many of the organizations have long term, low-cost leases with the Town for use of Town space. The relationships often trade maintenance by the Town for a concessionary rent.

Action Items:

a. Plan for the use of the Town building assets.

Rockport should review the status of all Town-owned buildings that are leased to non-profits on a multi-year or occasional use basis. Goals can be set for each building (regarding maintenance, preservation, use, etc.) and the actual conditions can be measured against the goals. Getting leased buildings on a self-sustaining income, while controlling costs to the Town, could be a beneficial outcome that might emerge from the process.

Underutilized space in town-owned buildings, space not currently under lease or not currently in use by the leaseholders, could be considered for lease or sublease to for-profit businesses to increase revenue for the Town

b. Continue to develop relationships between the Town and the various non-profit organizations that lease Town facilities.

This recommendation focuses on the Town's relationship with building tenants, and the specifics of the leases and terms. Rockport could review the current status of fees and leases for all municipal buildings used by private, for-profit or non-profit organizations. The review could cover the building uses, and the maintenance and financial arrangements with the Town. On an ongoing basis, recommendations could be developed regarding any needed improvements and if needed, they could be implemented when a lease is up for renewal. These changes should be focused on the health of the organizations, the maintenance of the buildings, returns on the Town's assets, and public benefit.

2. DEVELOP AN EFFICIENT FACILITY FOR TOWN GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN, EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO TOWN RESIDENTS AND OTHERS DOING BUSINESS WITH THE TOWN.

Evaluate the needs of Town government for space and resources, and assure that the resources are available and that they function efficiently.

In the late 1990's a report was prepared for the Town by SEA Consultants Inc. titled Master Plan for the Repair, Renovation and New Construction of Town Facilities. Phase One contained a Survey of Existing Conditions and Phase Two provided a Schematic Master Plan (6/5/98 and 9/10/98). Since the publication of the report several recommendations have been implemented: a new

Police facility with a community meeting room has been constructed on Great Hill; the obsolete Carnegie Library has been sold; the Forest Fire Station on T-Wharf has been relocated and new public restrooms and Harbormasters' offices have been constructed in its place; a new youth center, the Ben Beyea Center, has been built on Poole's Lane near Evans Field. The study spurred discussion and led to new solutions resulting in positive changes as the Town has made progress in re-developing or re-purposing its public buildings.

In April 2010 voters at Town Meeting authorized the Town to purchase the former Granite Savings Bank parcel adjacent to Town Hall. The land added by this important acquisition, joined to that already owned by the Town, resulted in a 1.3 acre parcel of land. A parcel of that size could open up opportunities for redevelopment of the entire

site. This expanded footprint should be kept in mind when considering present and future Town Government needs.

The following recommendations suggest the Town should continue pursuit of the best uses for its real estate.

Action Item:

a. Evaluate the current Town Government Campus to maximize use of space for efficiency in addressing public needs.

There are four buildings and related parking lots in close proximity on Broadway: on the northwest side, Town Hall and the former Granite Savings Bank; on the southeast side, Central Fire Station and the former Police Station. This cluster of real estate should be evaluated as a whole. A study addressing programming and concept design would

update the work done in 1998, and would guard against piece-meal development. Such a study should include consideration of how town facilities accommodate the needs for meeting space and document storage for the many boards and committees that contribute to the Town's operation, with the goal to accommodate such meeting and storage needs, including, as much as possible, predicted future needs.

3. WITH ITS EXTENSIVE REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS IN THE DOWNTOWN, THE TOWN SHOULD CONSIDER WAYS THAT THESE ASSETS CAN ENHANCE THE LOCAL ECONOMY, AS WELL AS ADD TO TOWN REVENUE.

Rockport is a very attractive place for office and small retail businesses, as well as residential housing. The Town's building assets can be considered for revenue generating uses, while

achieving the public goals of supporting maintenance of buildings and generation of municipal revenue.

Action Items:

a. Seek opportunities to share Government and private business real estate to attract new ventures, perhaps from the emerging creative economy.

The creative economy is defined as "those industries that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation of ideas, products and/or services." (ConsultEcon, Inc., April 11, 2008). Rockport embodies many factors attractive to entrepreneurial businesses. Developing office or workspace in Town-owned buildings could attract new businesses to Rockport, providing jobs and building a sustainable economic base while increasing revenue to the Town.

A new development encompassing the combined Town Hall and former Granite Savings Bank parcels might offer an opportunity for a government/retail venture. Taking advantage of the parcel's two street-fronts, the Broadway sidewalk could be enlivened by retail shops, galleries, and restaurants, while the historically less-commercial Jewett Street could serve as the front door for Town government offices. The natural grade slope of Broadway offers an opportunity for a parking deck tucked below grade on the site, augmenting surface level parking for local residents, people visiting or working at Town Hall, and patrons of businesses in the area.

b. Seek opportunities for a residential option in Town-owned buildings.

Locating housing downtown encourages citizen involvement in the community. Residential use of space in Town-owned

buildings could alleviate critical housing needs. The building assessment described in VI.1.a could identify appropriate space for such a use.

VII. Address Parking, Traffic, Pedestrian, and Infrastructure Concerns

The streets and sidewalks in downtown Rockport are in relatively good condition,, but some of the other key infrastructures, including the light and electric poles, are in need of significant upgrades. Much of the underground infrastructures, including water, sewer, and storm drains, are also in need of repair in many areas of the downtown. Rockport presents serious challenges to parking and truck deliveries because of its retention of

historic buildings and historic street pattern development. Many of these issues have been noted as concerns in letters, emails, and public meetings. Finally, new infrastructure needs, such as separate bicycle access, are difficult to fit in the narrow streets of downtown. The following recommendations are designed to address key concerns that surfaced during development of the Downtown Master Plan.

1. IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE AND FUNCTION OF DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE AMENITIES.

Mismatched and seriously deteriorated fixtures and street furniture, ranging from street lights to trash cans, have been documented photographically by frustrated merchants; in some cases, appearance is as important as function. Development of a unified design scheme, coupled

with a selection of high quality replacement items and a plan for replacement, can provide significant improvement to the appearance of the downtown. At the top of the list of important infrastructure amenities, restrooms are required by visitors and helpful for residents as well.

Action Items:

a. Develop a streetscape improvement plan with a uniform design concept for downtown infrastructure.

A uniform design plan would be the central element of a streetscape improvement plan. The concept would include proposed designs for all sidewalks, crosswalks, street furniture, lighting, trash and recycling receptacles, parking meters, and tree planting and maintenance. Use of high quality products would reduce maintenance and replacement costs. In addition to the uniform design plan, the streetscape improvement plan could include a capital plan for replacement of features, including some funding from donations as well as a public commitment.

The design plan should address issues concerning specific areas, such as changing the pavement on Bearskin Neck to reflect its primarily pedestrian use. Another might be a redesign of the Dock Square traffic island, location of the new “Welcome to Rockport” map. The island could be expanded, made more inviting, and re-configured to encourage safe pedestrian street-crossing. Recommendation VII.2.c. suggests applying for CDBG funds for cross-walk work for handicapped access in this busy central spot in Town. This effort might also identify additional locations for public restrooms.

b. Improve lighting in downtown Rockport.

Key elements in the effort to improve lighting include improvements in the appearance of the lights and replacement of fixtures that have exceeded their useful life. There should be an effort to reduce glare and light trespass, which is particularly important in the downtown where there is extensive residential use, much of it located in the commercial areas. A program that uses light meters to assess the brightness of private and public lights should be considered. After results are recorded, a plan for improving lighting overall can be developed to conform with the by-law.

A lighting improvement plan could include straightening leaning utility poles, replacing overhead lighting with pedestrian level lighting where appropriate, and/or adding pedestrian level lighting to existing electrical poles. One pilot project might be removal of the cobrahead lights on Bearskin Neck, replacing them with pedestrian level lights, with the added benefit of drawing eyes away from the forest of wires above.

The Town could explore feasibility of purchasing the downtown light fixtures, giving the Town control of maintenance and design, and opening the possibility of burying utility wires on Bearskin Neck. This project could serve as a demonstration project for other areas in the downtown. Transportation Enhancement funds might be available to undertake this effort, although fund sources generally require completed design for eligibility.

c. Improve the appearance and location of existing and new infrastructure on Bearskin Neck.

This recommendation would emerge from the development of a streetscape improvement plan for the downtown. For Bearskin Neck, it could address several items that may seem disconnected, but all contribute to a sense of disorganization, and some may be relatively easy to improve. Several public meetings and the Bearskin Neck Study undertaken in 2004 identified similar concerns.

A few examples:

- Drivers returning from the end of Bearskin Neck face a DO NOT ENTER sign to direct them around to Middle Street. The sign is unattractive, and in the profusion of shop signage, often missed. The use of defined pavement markings might be more effective, as well as more attractive.
- Do all the cars on the Neck really need to be there? Perhaps the entrance to Bearskin Neck could have attractive signs encouraging limited access.
- On White Wharf, a portable toilet intended for use by the public is unmarked, leaving it unclear that it's for public use.
- There are no signs indicating public access to White, Lumber, and Middle Wharves. Directional and interpretive signs are needed to tell visitors where they are welcome and to suggest appropriate routes. Effective signage would enhance the experience for visitors and residents alike.

2. IMPROVE CIRCULATION IN DOWNTOWN ROCKPORT.

Rockport has long been a navigation challenge for first time visitors who do not know precisely where they are going, how to get there, and where to park. Add to that a tractor trailer backing up for a delivery on Bearskin Neck and gridlock

results. Rockport has made some efforts to alleviate these problems, but there is still much that remains to be done. Some of these recommendations are not very difficult, while others present a longer term challenge.

Action Items:

- a. **Reduce traffic and pedestrian conflict during truck deliveries on Bearskin Neck by assigning the Traffic Committee or other entity to develop and implement a solution.**

Identify or organize an appropriate entity (new or existing committee or board) and request that they develop guidelines for truck deliveries on Bearskin Neck. Address the size of trucks, frequency of deliveries, and timing of deliveries. This effort should include Bearskin Neck residents and businesses, town officials, and delivery companies as well as conversation with towns who have addressed similar challenges. There have been some discussions but thus far, inadequate resolution. An initial step might be to discourage general traffic from wandering onto Bearskin Neck by limiting access to cars with handicapped plates, residents, and business personnel, during the middle hours of the day.

- b. **Work with user groups and a civil engineer to redesign the pedestrian/bicycle/automobile features within the downtown to reduce conflict.**

Downtown Rockport's sidewalks are well-used and are in generally good condition. Crosswalks need maintenance and restriping (a striping style should be identified as part of Recommendation VII.1.a.) to make the downtown more attractive and understandable, and to make the corridors more efficient and safe for pedestrians. This is particularly critical given the volume of pedestrians that are accommodated in the downtown during the visitor season and the conflict with vehicles, particularly on Bearskin Neck. Sidewalks are missing in key locations, such as Nugent Stretch, and extension of sidewalks should be considered.

- c. **Apply for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant funds for accessibility improvements for physically**

handicapped people at pedestrian crossings in the downtown.

The DPW has begun to identify crosswalks that need to be made handicapped accessible. This list should be completed and can be included with an application for housing rehabilitation funds to be submitted in the fall of 2011. This application is described more fully in Recommendation II.2.a.

- d. **Develop a bicycle plan for Rockport engaging users, clubs, or organizations in the area**

Downtown Rockport accommodates pedestrians fairly well, but there is no planned or designed accommodation for bicycles. Bicycles have been identified state-wide as a



Bike rack on Bearskin Neck

transportation form that needs to be better accommodated. Planning for bicycle accommodation can mean making separate lanes for bicycles, developing a "share the road" program, improving bicycle parking, and/or improving bike access throughout town. A suggestion that arose from Rockport's planning effort was for designated bicycle paths/lanes from Gloucester to Rockport on Rt. 127 both north and south of town. Improved bicyclist safety on Granite and South Streets and Thatcher Road is important; although not within the downtown, they serve as connections in and out of the downtown. It

has been noted that while recently installed sidewalks on Thatcher Road have improved pedestrian safety, the new curbing has actually decreased bicyclist safety by narrowing their “lane.”

The DPW has recently installed a number of bicycle racks in the downtown area. A formal bicycle plan could identify locations for additional racks, point out dangerous intersections for cyclists, highlight popular bicycle routes, suggest options for overnight

accommodations, and recommend candidate roads for “share the road” programs. Resident bicyclists could advise the DPW on a regular basis about dangerous road features such as raised storm drain grills or potholes that are likely to cause accidents. Successful creative bicycle plans have been undertaken in many towns by volunteers or interns. The Town might consider creation of a permanent bicycle advisory committee and consult such groups in other towns.

3. USE SIGNAGE TO DECREASE TRAFFIC CONFLICTS AND IMPROVE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE.

Two critical components of a successful visitor experience are the ability to easily locate an attraction and enjoyment of the attraction through its identification and interpretation. At the present time, Rockport has neither signage directing visitors to resources, nor on-the-street information about architectural features, historic significance, or cultural and industrial activities at locations around town. This is a serious shortcoming for a community like Rockport. If

ongoing efforts to have the area designated as a part of the National Scenic Byway are successful, funds may become available to address this need. Initial efforts could be directed toward obtaining CDBG funds for a specific set of wayfinding signs. Work might begin with the Sandy Bay Historical Society and others to develop appropriate interpretive sign locations and content. The two action items below refer back to Section III where these projects are more fully described.

Action Items:

a. Develop and install a wayfinding signage program to improve access to downtown.

(See recommendation III.1.a for a description of this recommendation)

b. Develop and install an interpretive signage program to enhance visitors’ understanding and appreciation of the area.

(See recommendation III.1.b for a description of this recommendation)

4. IMPROVE THE LOCATION AND FUNCTION OF PARKING OPPORTUNITIES.

Parking is acknowledged to be one of the key “issues” in Rockport for visitors and residents alike. There are many aspects to parking and therefore many potential solutions. In 2009 a consultant from Nelson-Nygaard, a national consulting firm specializing in parking, led an evening of discussion. Many new ideas were suggested, making it clear that there was much more to this issue than the often heard statement “there is not enough parking and there is almost no way to get more.” One major conclusion from the presentation was that the Town would greatly

benefit from a comprehensive parking assessment, with recommendations about changes in parking fees, parking zones and locations, mapping, striping, and information provided for the public. Because of the complexity of the issue, this Master Plan recommends further planning for parking, as well as some quick action for the most immediate needs.

Action Items:

a. Develop a new approach to parking design, location, and fees in the downtown.

Begin an interim program to identify a new approach to parking and to design and implement a system that better allocates and prices parking. The “experimental plan” could encompass a broad range of parking concerns, including location, timing, metering and meters, fees, available spaces, potential for valet parking, etc. Rockport could begin immediately, through the Traffic Committee, DPW Board, and Planning Board, to prepare a warrant article requesting funds for a firm to undertake a parking analysis. This analysis would make both short- and long-term recommendations for effective ways to change parking locations and regulations to achieve two overarching goals: to maintain or improve access to downtown resources, and to reduce traffic and parking conflicts.

b. Improve the Cape Ann Transit Parking and Shuttle service.

A review of the Cape Ann Transit shuttle service identified several inconsistencies that can and should be easily addressed in the coming year. These improvements include distribution of the schedule at the park-and-ride lot to reassure riders that the shuttle has a firm schedule; the schedule now can be accessed only on-line. The schedule should include a map indicating reliable pick-up and drop-off locations and shuttle stops should be signed so tourists can easily locate them. All of this information should be available at the in-town booth and at the Chamber of Commerce

Information Booth on Main Street en route into Town. Volunteers at the Chamber of Commerce Booth should be well-informed about the shuttle. Taking a larger view, participants in one of the public meetings suggested an expansion of the shuttle trolley route to include some of the inns or motels outside downtown. A comprehensive study to determine need, potential use levels, and cost, is necessary to determine whether such a program might be successful. This effort might be undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce.

c. Improve access to existing downtown parking.

Visitors to Rockport are often unaware of many free parking locations in downtown. There is a natural tendency to drive downtown to see if a parking space can be found, thus clogging circulation, especially in the one-way Dock Square to Main Street section. A suggestion was made that unmetered side streets could be striped to delineate parking spaces, thereby maximizing use of street parking. A map of downtown indicating all streets where public parking is allowed might encourage visitors to try those options. The map should indicate that parking at the end of Bearskin Neck is very limited, perhaps discouraging unproductive cruising there. The map could be available from the Information Booth, with the strong encouragement that visitors use the shuttle as the first option.

5. CONTINUE TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PARKING LOT AND THE FUNCTION OF THE MBTA STATION.

Discussions continue with the MBTA for improvements to the parking lot and other features at the MBTA Commuter Rail Station. At this time, efforts to complete the design for station improvements have not been successful. The conditions at the train station—a pitted dirt

parking lot with potholes that fill with water or ice—make the facility barely functional for residents or visitors. It does not enhance the viability of the surrounding business and recreational use and does not function well as alternative parking at times when the lot is not in

use by rail commuters. The Town anticipates many benefits from improvements promised by

the MBTA and should continue involvement toward their completion.

Action Items:

a. Using the recommendations in the MBTA Station Area Plan (Community Preservation Associates, 2006), continue efforts to improve the greater MBTA Station area.

Make the MBTA station a welcoming gateway for visitors to Rockport. The MBTA Station could take the first steps in wayfinding and interpretive signage for the downtown. The station added an improved area map several years ago and that same map and appropriate informational brochures should be made available once again. Develop good wayfinding signage and marked trails to assist MBTA riders seeking access to the resources of Rockport. Businesses renting bicycles should be encouraged to locate in this area.

b. Continue the MBTA Station Planning and Advisory Committee (MSPAC) and its work with the MBTA.

The MSPAC is a group of citizens appointed by the Selectmen. After many challenging years of residents' work with the MBTA toward upgraded station design, Rockport may now be closer to real improvements at the Station than at any point in the past. Continued authorization of the MSPAC and its work with the MBTA is valuable in providing a forum for broad-based discussion of the issues, as well as for consideration of related potential development and other changes in the area. Moreover, Selectmen and other Town leaders should take every opportunity to engage legislative support for funding solid improvements for the Station.

c. Address possible rezoning in the Semi-Residential (SMR) zone.

The possibility for changes in some of the provisions of the SMR zone was a primary reason for undertaking the MBTA Station Area Plan. At the time, there was concern among

area residents about moving forward with any changes. After the General Zone review has been completed and any suggested changes for the downtown area are vetted, the Town's perspective on provisions of the SMR zone may change, and additional or different zoning changes may emerge. A further review of the SMR zone might be advisable after completion of first efforts on the General Zone.

d. Undertake transportation improvements in the vicinity of the MBTA station.

Access roads to the MBTA station are narrow, with some uncontrolled access, pedestrian conflicts, and an intersection at Five Corners that is more difficult than it need be. Development improvements to Railroad Avenue (safety, land markings, bicycle inclusion, sidewalk improvements) and to Poole's Lane (a study of reconstruction options) would be an important start for this area. A traffic analysis at Five Corners would be very beneficial. In February 2011 the Town will receive a review of the intersection from Department of Transportation officials.

e. Pedestrian improvements in the MBTA Station Area.

In the 2006 Commuter Rail Station Area Concept Plan, planners offered several concepts for redeveloping the public and private properties in the area. With the current vacancies in the area (winter 2011), it is timely to discuss with landowners their plans for marketing the real estate and their concerns about and support for planning and redevelopment of the area, including pedestrian improvements.

This is especially timely as potential MBTA Station improvements have been put on hold.

6. UNDERTAKE BASIC STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS TO CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE DOWNTOWN.

Significant portions of the downtown waterfront area are in a FEMA “velocity zone” on the Federal Insurance Rate Map. This means that in addition to flooding, wave action can cause further damage to buildings in the area. In the late 1880’s, a breakwater to provide protection was built at the end of Bearskin Neck. This breakwater has been

collapsing over the years, providing less protection to portions of the downtown and to the Rockport Harbor area. A recently completed Hazard Mitigation Plan (MAPC, 2010) recommended that the Town undertake evaluation and reconstruction of the breakwater.

Action Item:

a. Move forward with recommendations included in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Storms in the winter of 2010/2011 have shown the vulnerability of Rockport to coastal storms with weakening of key infrastructure that protects the harbor and waterfront. Rockport should continue to identify specific requirements to rebuild the breakwater, while pursuing other hazard mitigation measures as they become necessary. Funding and required approvals should be pursued for implementation of necessary reconstruction of the Town’s breakwater and seawalls to assure protection of the downtown area.



Front Beach at low tide



Old Burial Ground

Implementation Plan

Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
I. PRESERVE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF ROCKPORT				
<i>I.1 Develop Design Guidelines for historic properties</i>				
I.1.a	Complete Design Guidelines by fall 2011		Short term	HC, PB, ZBA
I.1.b	Prepare generic version of Design Guidelines for use with other historic properties		Short-Medium	HC, CPC
I.1.c	Amend zoning to reduce architectural changes inconsistent with historically-important features.		Short	PB
I.1.d	Improve the HC's ability to protect historic resources in downtown Rockport		Medium	HC, CPC, BI
<i>1.2 Assist residential property owners with funding for historic rehabilitation</i>		23 votes - High		
I.2.a	Apply for CDBG grant for housing rehabilitation in the Downtown		Short	RHP, CPC
I.2.b	Inform local banks regarding emphasis on maintaining historically important properties		Short	HC
<i>I.3 Complete historic property surveys for Bearskin Neck, and designate as local historic district</i>				
I.3.a	Apply for CP funds to complete local historic district designation for Bearskin Neck	19 votes-High	Short	HC, CPC
<i>1.4 Protect historic resources in Rockport from teardowns</i>				
I.4.a	Develop and pass a demolition delay by-law	24 votes-High	Medium	HC, PB, BI
<i>1.5 Use zoning by-law to assist in preservation of historic quality of building and streetscape</i>				
I.5.a	Review General Zone provisions and recommend changes consistent with preservation of historic features	22 votes-High	Short	PB, HC, ZBA

Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
<i>1.6 Emphasize key historic features on media that serve visitors</i>				
I.6.a	Develop coordinated approach to visitor information		Medium-Long	CAC, SBHS, HC, EDC
I.6.b	Identify preserved historic buildings and develop program to acknowledge owners		Medium	HC, SBHS
II. IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS AND ACCESS				
<i>II.1 Undertake additional research on zoning and development incentives</i>				
II.1.a	Assess whether the conversion of rental units to condos is beneficial to the downtown and its residents		Medium	RHP, FC
II.1.b	Incorporate mixed-use options in the General, Semi-Residential and Residential zones		Medium	PB
<i>II.2 Develop programs to support and expand affordable housing in the Downtown</i>		14 votes-High		
II.2.a	Develop a program to fund rehabilitation of downtown housing units for LMI residents		Short	RHP, BOS, PB
II.2.b	Augment CDBG funds with CP funds to rehabilitation and assure long-term affordability		Medium	RHP, CPC
III. IMPROVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION FOR SEASONAL VISITORS TO ROCKPORT				
<i>III.1 Coordinate visitors' services/interests</i>				
III.1.a	Develop a wayfinding program identifying location, sign design and content, construction		Medium	CAC, DPW, EDC, TC
III.1.b	Develop a program of interpretive signage; select buildings, areas, and events to be interpreted, develop narrative, and design and locate signs	20 votes -High	Medium	SBHS, PB, EDC, OSRC
III.1.c	Develop audio walking tours		Medium	CAC, SBHS, EDC, OSRC
III.1.d	Integrate QR codes into the development of information for tourists	29 votes-High	Medium	SBHS, CAC, EDC

Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
III.1.e	Collect information on the interests of new user groups		Short	CAC
III.1.f	Identify key gaps in visitor services		Short	CAC, EDC
III.1.g	Initiate visits to Rockport		Medium	CAC
IV. ENHANCE CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS				
<i>IV.1 Improve scheduling and communications among event planners</i>				
IV.1.a	Coordinate scheduling and publicity for cultural events		Short	CAC, EDC
V. IMPROVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY/VIABILITY OF ROCKPORT'S DOWNTOWN				
<i>V.1 Organize to undertake economic development</i>				
V.1.a	Develop a leadership team to study and undertake business development		Medium	EDC, CAC
V.1.b	Coordinate and enhance local efforts for economic development	49 votes-High	Medium-Long	EDC
<i>V.2 Analyze the downtown business mix, consider business improvement, attraction and retention</i>				
V.2.a	Analyze store front vacancies		Medium	EDC, realtors
V.2.b	Prepare information that realtors can use in marketing commercial space		Short	EDC, CAC, realtors
V.2.c	EDC meet with local businesses on strategies for local employment		Short	EDC, RHS, businesses
V.2.d	Develop procedures to lengthen season		Short-Medium	EDC, CAC
<i>V.3 Explore roles to support commercial fishing</i>				
V.3.a	Initiate contact and coordinate with fishery development activities in Gloucester		Short-Medium	EDC, CAC
<i>V.4 Develop ecotourism opportunities</i>				
V.4.a	Develop a Rockport identity with resources for ecotourism	15 votes - High	Medium	EDC, CAC, ecotourists, OSRC

Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
V.4.b	Develop user information for ecotourism activities		Medium	EDC, CAC, ecotourists, OSRC
V.4.c	Develop comprehensive literature for specific ecotourism activities		Medium	EDC, CAC, ecotourists, OSRC
<i>V.5 Review key natural features in Downtown and identify to access, use, and protect resources</i>				
V.5.a	Improve facilities on Downtown ecotourism sites		Medium	EDC, DPW, CPC
<i>V.6 Continue efforts to make MBTA Station area an economic asset</i>				
V.6.a	Work with new development within the MBTA Station area to achieve goals of the plan		Short-Medium-Long	EDC, MSPAC, PB
V.6.b	Continue to consider redevelopment options in the MBTA Station area		Short-Medium	PB, DPW, BOS, MSPAC
V.6.c	Encourage private cleaning and building maintenance in MBTA Station area		Short	BOS, DPW, CAC, EDC
V.6.d	Continue advocating for design improvements in MBTA Station area		Short	MSPAC, DPW, BOS, PB
VI. IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE, USE, AND VIABILITY OF TOWN GOVERNMENT AND TOWN BUILDINGS				
<i>VI.1 Support the Town's many non-profit organizations</i>				
VI.1.a	Plan for the use of the Town building assets		Medium	BOS, Capital PC, BSC
VI.1.b	Develop relationships between the Town and non-profit organizations that lease facilities		Short	BOS
<i>VI.2 Develop efficient facility for town government within Downtown</i>				
VI.2.a	Evaluate current Town government Campus to maximize use of space	12 votes-High	Medium	BOS, BSC, DPW, Capital PC
<i>VI.3 Consider ways to use real estate assets to enhance the local economy and town revenue</i>				
VI.3.a	Share Government and business real estate to attract new ventures		Long	BOS, Capital PC, EDC

Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
VI.3.b	Seek residential options for Town-owned buildings as appropriate		Long	BOS, Capital PC, CPC
VII. ADDRESS PARKING, TRAFFIC, PEDESTRIAN, AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS				
<i>VII.1 Improve appearance and function of downtown infrastructure</i>				
VII.1.a	Develop a streetscape improvement plan with uniform design concept	30 votes - High	Medium-Long	DPW, PB, TC
VII.1.b	Improve lighting in downtown Rockport		Short-Medium	Capital PC, DPW, PB
VII.1.c	Improve appearance of existing and new infrastructure on Bearskin Neck	6 votes - High	Medium-Long	DPW, PB, TC
<i>VII.2 Improve circulation in downtown Rockport</i>				
VII.2.a	Reduce traffic and pedestrian conflict during truck deliveries on Bearskin Neck		Short-Medium	TC, BOS, DPW
VII.2.b	Redesign the pedestrian/bicycle/automobile features within the Downtown	12 votes - High	Medium-Long	TC, BOS, DPW
VII.2.c	Apply for CDBG funds for accessibility improvements on downtown sidewalks		Short-Medium	BOS, DPW, PB
VII.2.d	Develop a bicycle plan for the Downtown		Medium	DPW, resident bicyclists
<i>VII.3 Decrease traffic conflicts and improve visitor experience through signage (see recommendations under III.1.a and III.1.b)</i>				
<i>VII.4 Improve the location and function of parking</i>				
VII.4.a	Develop a new approach to parking design, location, and fees in the Downtown	23 votes - High	Medium-Long	BOS, TC, DPW, PB
VII.4.b	Improve the Cape Ann Transit Parking and Shuttle service		Short	CATA, BOS, DPW
VII.4.c	Improve access to existing downtown parking	14 votes - High	Short-Long	TC, BOS, DPW
<i>VII.5 Continue improvements to the parking lot and the function of the MBTA Station</i>				
VII.5.a	Continue implementation of recommendations from the MBTA Station Area Plan		Medium-long	DPW, EDC, MSPAC
VII.5.b	Continue the MBTA Planning and Advisory Committee		Short	BOS, MSPAC
VII.5.c	Address possible rezoning in the SMR zone near the MBTA Station		Medium	PB, EDC

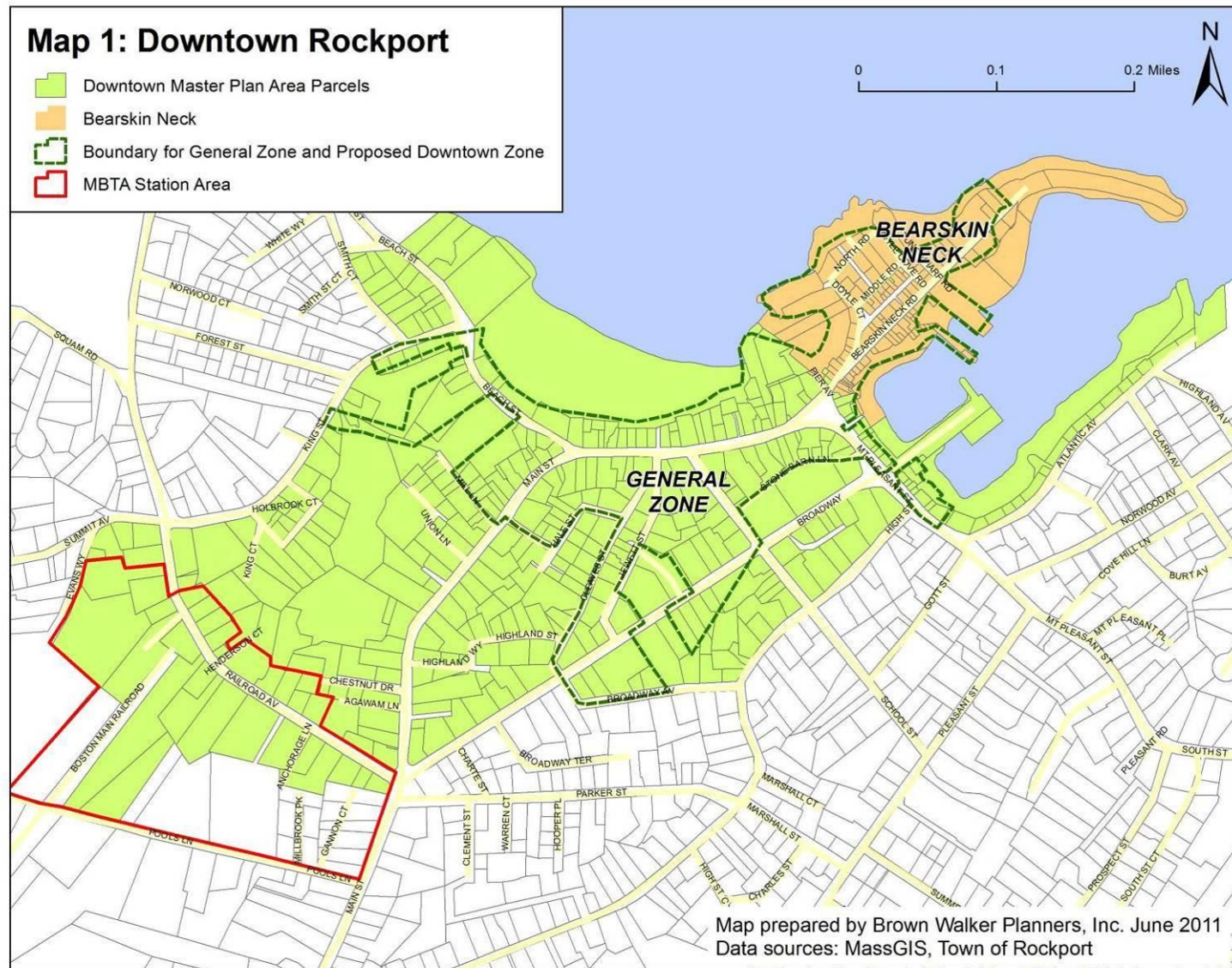
Summary of Recommendations		Priority*	Time-frame**	Responsibility***
VII.5.d	Undertake transportation improvements in the vicinity of the MBTA Station		Long	DPW, PB
VII.5.e	Implement pedestrian improvements in the MBTA Station Area		Long	DPW, PB
<i>VII.6 Undertake basic structural improvements to critical infrastructure in the Downtown</i>				
VII.6.a	Implement recommendations included in the Hazard Mitigation Plan		Medium	DPW, BOS

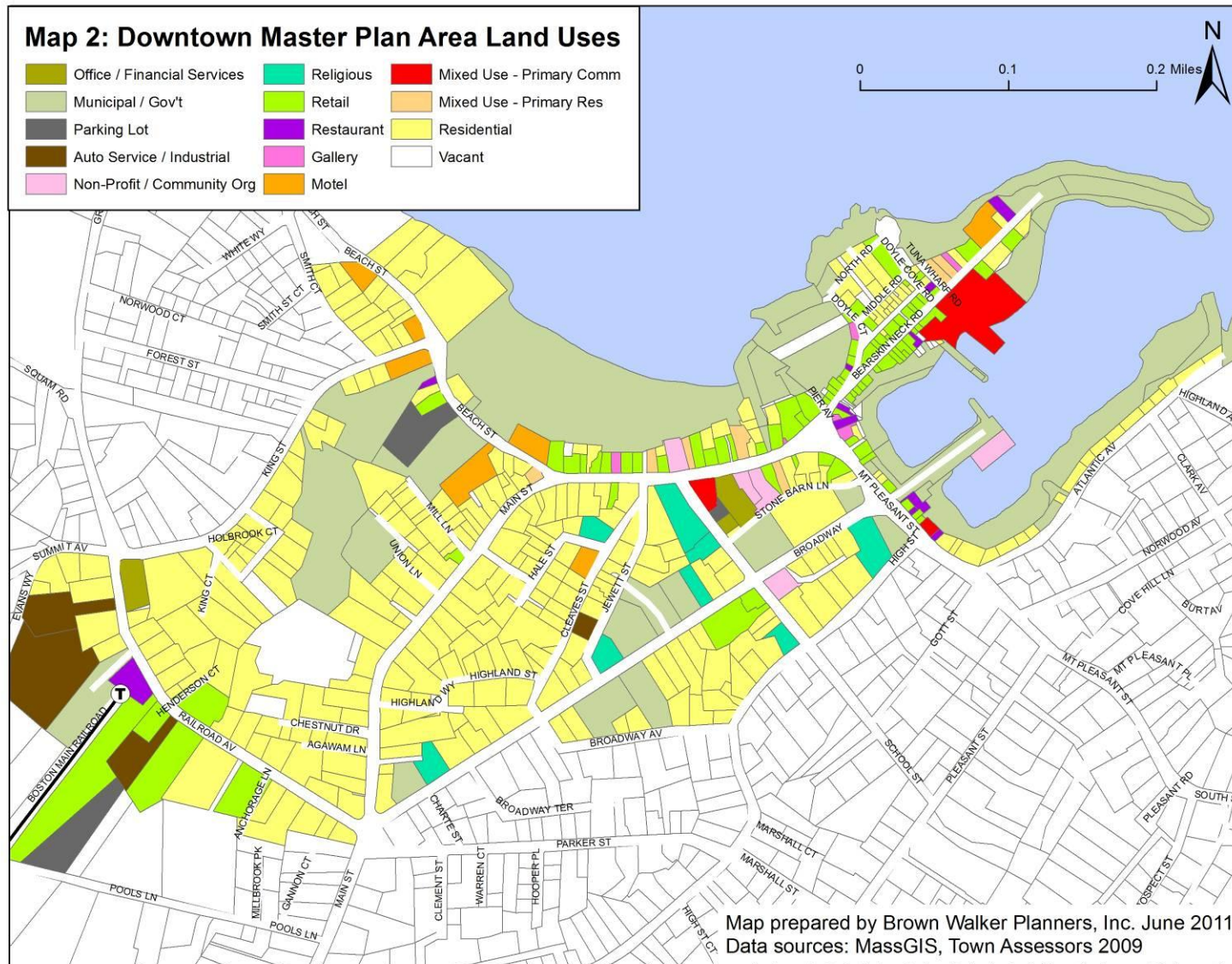
* Grey shading indicates highest priority selected by attendees at Planning Board meeting on March 10, 2011

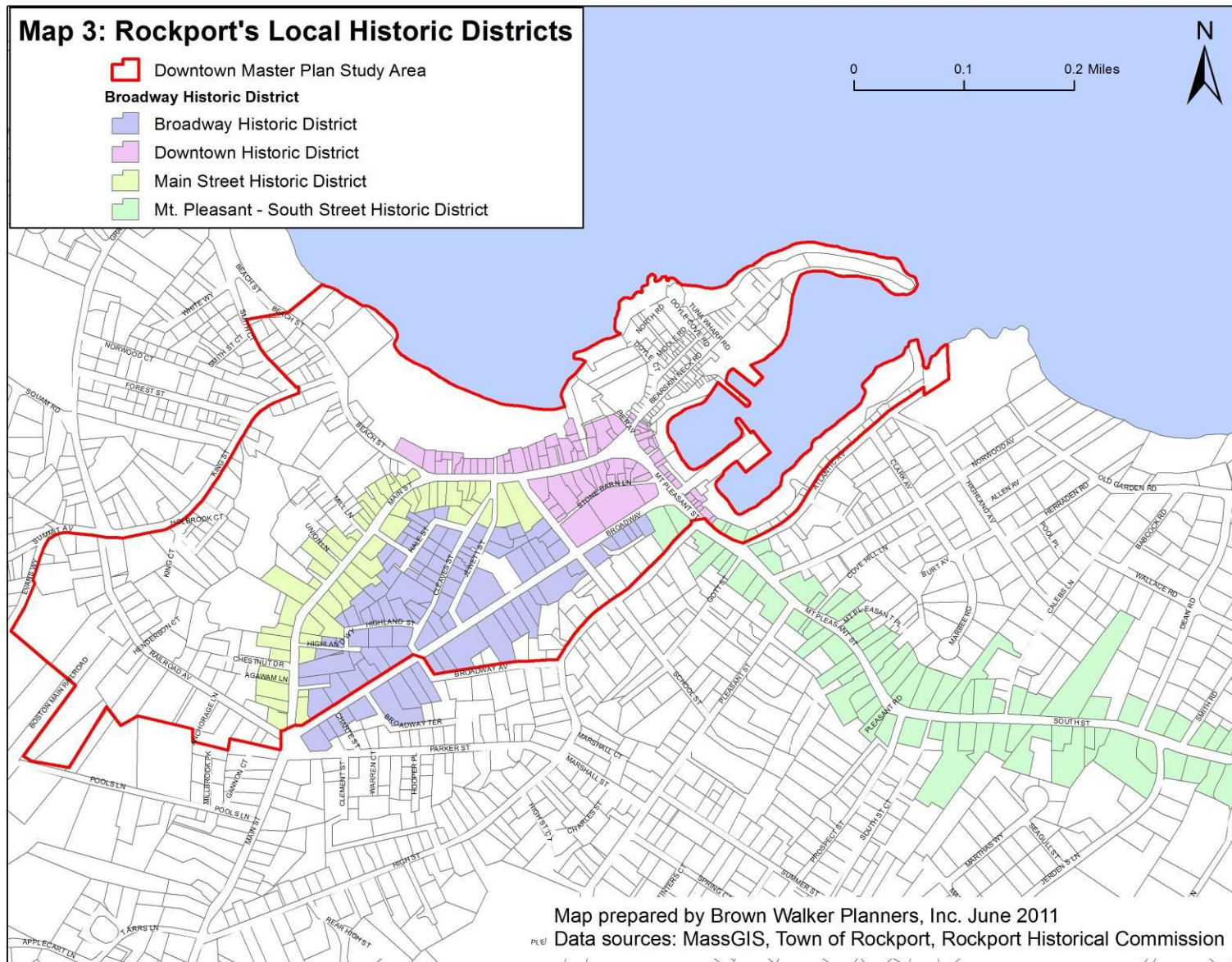
** Note: Short Term (less than 1 year to complete); Medium Term (1-3 years to complete); Long Term (3 or more years to complete)

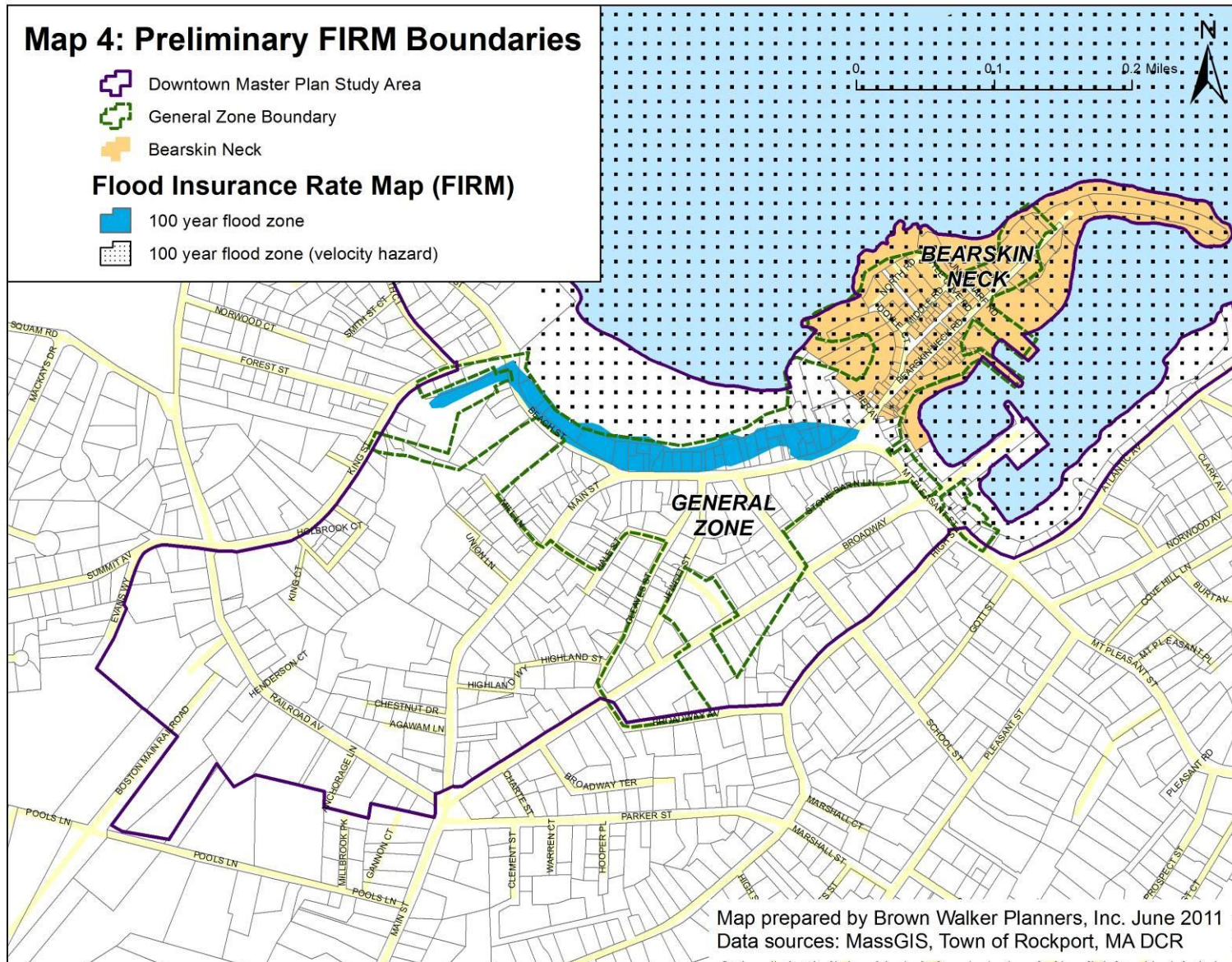
***Note: BOS (Board of Selectmen); BI (Building Inspector); Building Study Committee (BSC); CAC (Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce); CAT (Cape Ann Transit); CPC (Community Preservation Committee); CapitalPC (Capital Planning Committee); DPW (Department of Public Works); EDC (Economic Development Committee); Finance Committee (FC); HC (Historical Commission); MSPAC (MBTA Planning and Advisory Committee); Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC); RHS (Rockport High School); RHP (Rockport Housing Partnership); SBHS (Sandy Bay Historical Society); TC (Traffic Committee); ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals)

Maps









Appendices

Appendix 1: References and Resources

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Appendix 2: Chapter 91 Licenses in Downtown

Special Acts of the Legislature and Chapter 91 Licenses in Downtown Area as of June 2011

Special Acts						
Chapter	Map	Parcel	Location	Current Owner	Description	Year issued
76	35	1A	21 Old Harbor Rd.	Town of Rockport	Construction of White Wharf	1810
76	35	3	Old Harbor Rd.	Town of Rockport	Development of parkland	1810
76	35	5	15 Old Harbor Rd.	Millicent Bruce	Pier for single family residence	1810
76	35	6	Old Harbor Rd.	Millicent Bruce	Undevelopable pier	1810
76	35	6A	Old Harbor Rd.	Town of Rockport	Boat slips at pier off Bearskin Neck	1810
261	All coastal parcels between Headlands and Old Harbor			Town of Rockport	Purchase all lands and flats, develop breakwaters, piers, and wharves	1855

Chapter 91 Licenses						
License #	Map	Parcel	Location	Current Owner	Description	Year issued
1810	35	6A	Old Harbor Rd.	Town of Rockport	Boat slips at White Wharf requiring fill, piles, utilities, float, ramp	1988
3536	35	7A	Old Harbor Flats	Andrew Menna	Maintain seawalls, steps, terrace, boathouse	1953
3536	35	10	6 Old Harbor Rd.	Theodorus Taminiau	Maintain seawalls, steps, terrace, boathouse	1953
3536	35	11B	2A Old Harbor Rd.	Albert Ruben	Maintain seawalls, steps, terrace, boathouse	1953
3536	35	11	14 Bearskin Neck	Margaret Coonley	Maintain seawalls, steps, terrace, boathouse	1953
4669	35	15	4 Bearskin Neck	Helena Radi	Maintain building on piles and construct an addition	1963
8818	35	17	21 Dock Sq.	William McLaughlin	Maintain 2 story bldg. on filled tidelands	2002
1597	36	17	Atlantic Ave.	Town of Rockport	Park with retaining wall, rip-rap fill	1987

Chapter 91 Licenses						
3634	36	26	Mt. Pleasant	Laurence Bershad	Maintain and extend bldg. on piles with Blacksmith shop as tenant	1954
4448	36	26	Mr. Pleasant	Laurence Bershad	Extend existing bldg. on piles with Blacksmith Shop as tenant	1961
7918	36	33	T Wharf	Town of Rockport	Reconstruct wharf, new piles, dredge and fill at T and Bradley Wharves	1999
153	36	33A	T Wharf	Sandy Bay YC lease from Town of Rockport	Build seawall and pile wharf, fill, dredge	1917
4104	36	33A	T Wharf	Sandy Bay YC lease from Town of Rockport	Maintain bldgs., floats, ramp, establish marina	1996
830	36	69	Bearskin Neck	Tuna Wharf Condos	Fill to mean high water and build seawall	1884
4065	36	69	Bearskin Neck	Tuna Wharf Condos	Fill to mean high water and build seawall	1957
2229	36	69	Bearskin Neck	Vaughn Hawley	Construct and maintain landing, ramp, float for commercial landing of excursion passengers	1990

Appendix 3: Glossary of Abbreviations

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant – An annual grant program available for activities addressing needs of low and moderate income residents and improving blighting influences in communities.

CP- Community Preservation – State legislation adopted by Rockport that requires payment of a surtax on real estate taxes to fund projects in land protection, recreation, housing for residents in need, and historic preservation.

DHCD – Department of Housing and Community Development – Massachusetts State agency supporting housing and community development projects.

DOT – Department of Transportation – Massachusetts State transportation agency

EDC – Economic Development Committee – Rockport Town committee to plan for and support economic development activities in Town.

ENHC – Essex National Heritage Commission – Non-profit organization with some federal funding supporting cultural, historical, and economic activities in the region.

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency – Federal agency that prepares flood hazard maps and oversees regulations on development in flood plains. It also responds to emergencies and disasters.

HC – Rockport Historical Commission – The Rockport Historical Commission undertakes review of proposed development activities in the Local Historic Districts.

LHD – Local Historic District – Areas designated by the Rockport Historical Commission as having important historical value based on the preparation of inventories of property in the district.

LMI – Low/Moderate Income – Households with an income of 80% of area median income or less.

MAPC – Metropolitan Area Planning Council – The regional planning agency for the region that includes Rockport.

MBTA – Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – The authority that operates commuter rail and subway systems in the Boston metropolitan area.

MHC – Massachusetts Historical Commission – State agency that reviews historic property inventories and nominates properties for the State and National Historical Registers.

NAICS – North American Industry Classification System – unique coding system to categorize all economic activity in the country.

QR Codes – Quick Response Codes – Codes that will call up a website by equipment capable of scanning the code.

SAFIS – Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System

Zones – D-Downtown; G-General; R-Residential ; SMR-Semi-Residential; R-A-Residence A; SR-Single Residence; RAA - Single Residence AA (See Rockport Zoning Map for locations)

ZBA – Zoning Board of Appeals – Town entity that reviews projects requesting special permits or variances.

Appendix 4: Rockport Performance Center Parking Plan

Introduction

The parking plan outlined in this document is intended to serve the patrons of the Rockport Performance Center with off-street parking and shuttle services during events held at the Center. The plan will provide 125 off-street parking spaces as based on the Rockport Zoning By-Law requirements:

330 - 335 seats/3 persons per vehicle =	110 - 112 spaces
5 employees/3 persons per vehicle =	2 spaces
12 volunteers/3 persons per vehicle =	4 spaces
<u>20 musicians/3 persons per vehicle =</u>	<u>7 spaces</u>
Total required:	123 -125 spaces

Description of Plan

All high season and shoulder season events held at the Performance Center, regardless of the presenting organization, will be covered by this parking plan. It will be the policy of the Center to provide information to all presenting organizations using the facility as to the location of off-street parking sites and available shuttle services to and from those sites. The Center will require the presenting organization using the facility to inform their patrons as to the location and availability of these off-street parking spaces. This will be done by offering the information on the presenting organization's web site, by displaying the information in advertisements announcing the event, as well as providing maps along with the tickets purchased in advance to their patrons.

All off-street parking sites will be guaranteed by means of a letter of understanding (as a minimum standard) between the owners of the parking sites and the Performance Center organization. At present the Performance Center is represented by the Rockport Chamber Music Festival (RCMF). Specific sites will be described in the tabulation section to follow.

The events at the Rockport Performance Center are grouped by the parking plan into four categories:

1. High Season Events During **Off-Hours** (June, July, August, September)
2. High Season Events During **Normal Business Hours**, Including Sundays (June, July, August, September)
3. Shoulder Season Events **Off-Hours** (May, October, November, December)
4. Winter Events (January, February, March, April)

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Events in Categories 1 and 3 will be served by off-street parking sites with extended shuttle service. Events in Category 2 will be served by the Blue Gate Meadow transfer station parking lot and the existing CATA Shuttle Service. Category 4 events (winter season) will not be served by off-street parking, since on-street parking is expected to be plentiful. Should the need arise in the future, off-street parking for winter events can be arranged.

Not covered by this parking plan are Shoulder Season Events during Normal Business Hours. Off-street parking would only be available at the Blue Gate Meadow transfer station parking lot, and a special shuttle service would need to be arranged, as the normal CATA summer (high season) shuttle service would not be operating.

The parking plan will address additional shuttle service to and from remote parking sites. Provision of shuttle services to Category 2 events, taking place during normal business hours during the high summer tourist season will be done by CATA, as it has in the past. The sites covered will be those that line the existing CATA shuttle route including the Blue Gate Meadow transfer station lot. Travel time over the shuttle loop is approximately 20 minutes. For Category 1 and 3 events when CATA shuttle services may not be available, extended hours shuttle services could be provided by private companies (see next section on shuttle service providers).

Shuttle Service Providers

Because of public subsidies, CATA must require RCMF to publish a nationwide (in two motor-bus trade magazines) request for proposals from private shuttle service providers to serve events taking place outside of the current annual CATA shuttle schedule. If no private firm submits a proposal to RCMF, CATA can then enter into direct negotiations with RCMF to provide extended services to the Rockport Performance Center parking patrons between remote sites and the venue. These new arrangements by CATA would serve events in Category 1 and 3 in addition to the Category 2 events already served.

RCMF may choose to make arrangements directly with private shuttle service providers and not engage CATA for extended services. In either case, the parking plan calls for providing shuttle services to all remote parking sites serving Performance Center events in Categories 1, 2, and 3. Winter events (Category 4) will also be served if the need arises.

Off-Street Parking Arrangements

Currently, the Rockport Chamber Music Festival uses the Rockport Art Association's Aldro Hibbard Gallery, 240 seats, at 12 Main Street as its performance venue. The two off-street parking sites used by RCMF are the Rockport National Bank, with 40 spaces attended by a Rockport Police detail, and the Beach Street Lot of the Peg Leg Inn, with 15 spaces. These sites are within walking distance of the both the Hibbard Gallery and the new Performance Center.

The parking plan has assumed the continuing availability of the Rockport National Bank Lot for all Category 1 and 3 events, which take place throughout the year during non-business hours. The Bank lot at 16 Main Street is just steps away from the new Performance Center at 37 Main Street.

Parking at the Peg Leg Inn's Beach Street lot, where owner Michael Welcome states that around 15 spaces may be available during the high and shoulder season (based on availability), is less certain. At present, there is a lease agreement for 15 parking spaces during the regular RCMF concert season during June of 2007. RCMF remains hopeful that a more secure arrangement can be made at this site.

The best off-street parking option for the new Performance Center is at Station Square. A framework for off-street parking at Station Square, at Smith Ace Hardware off Railroad Avenue, is under development. The site owner, Jay Smith, states that 85 spaces can be made available. This site will require shuttle service to and from the new Performance Center one half mile away on Main Street. The travel time for this shuttle loop is less than 10 minutes. RCMF is confident that Station Square will succeed as an off-street parking site for the new Performance Center.

RCMF is continuing its search for additional off-street parking sites.

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Parking Site Status Tabulation
(Event Parking for Rockport Performance Center)
Off-Hours, High and Shoulder Seasons)

<u>Parking Site</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>No. of Spaces</u> (Likely Avail.)	<u>Shuttle Service</u>
Rockport National Bank (Letter of Understanding)	1, 3	40	None needed
Peg Leg Inn Lot (Beach Street) (Negotiation on hold)	1, 3	15+	None needed
Station Square (Railroad Ave.) (Negotiation underway)	1, 3	85	Private (or CATA) (Negotiate in future)
Total Off-Street Parking	1, 3	140	Shuttle needed for 85
Total Spaces Required (Zoning By-Law Section V)		125	

Parking Site Status Tabulation
(Event Parking for Rockport Performance Center)
Normal Business Hours, High Season Only

<u>Parking Site</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>No. of Spaces</u> (Likely Avail.)	<u>Shuttle Service</u>
Blue Gate Meadow Transfer Sta. (Existing arrangement with Town) This is a publicly owned lot. Patrons compete with public for the 199+ spaces available.	2	199+ (based on avail.)	CATA

Exhibits

Once the off-street sites are guaranteed, exhibits such as maps and instructions to the Rockport Performance Center presenting organizations and their patrons can be made available.

Table 1 shows the parking supply for the survey area, which includes Broadway, Upper Main Street, Beach Street, King Street, School Street, Holbrook Court, Hale Street, and Highland Street. Off-street parking areas included in the survey were the two town office lots off Broadway, the Rockport National Bank lot on Upper Main Street, and the Peg Leg Inn lot on Beach Street. There are 315 on-street spaces and 155 off-street spaces in the study area which total 470 spaces.

Table 1 **Parking Supply In Vicinity of**
Rockport Chamber Music Festival

<i>On Street Parking</i>	Capacity (spaces)
Broadway	46
Upper Main Street (Route 127A)	77
Beach Street (Route 127A)	16
Upper Main Street	71
King Street	34
School Street	26
Cleaves Street	21
Jewett Street	7
Hale Street	8
Highland Street	3
Holbrook Court	6
<i>On Street Parking Total Spaces:</i>	315
<i>Off Street Parking</i>	
Rockport National Bank Lot	17
Peg Leg Inn Lot	61
Town Office Lot	18
Town Office Lot	59
<i>Off Street Parking Total Spaces</i>	155
TOTAL	470

Source: Earth Tech, Inc.

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Table 2 shows parking utilization by time and location for the Saturday count. The peak afternoon parking demand on Saturday occurred at 4:00 PM when overall parking utilization reached 90 percent. By 8:00 PM, parking utilization had decreased to 80 percent. Table 2 also shows available parking spaces observed during the Saturday parking survey. For Saturday, more spaces were available in the off-street parking areas than were available on-street.

Table 2 **Parking Utilization Summary – Saturday August 26, 2006**
Without Music Festival Performance

<i>On Street Parking</i>	Capacity (spaces)	Parking Occupancy				
		4:00 PM	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	7:00 PM	8:00 PM
Broadway	46	100%	93%	98%	104%	87%
Upper Main Street (Route 127A)	77	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Beach Street (Route 127A)	16	94%	94%	100%	94%	75%
Upper Main Street	71	96%	94%	86%	93%	86%
King Street	34	76%	74%	94%	88%	88%
School Street	26	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Cleaves Street	21	95%	90%	86%	90%	81%
Jewett Street	7	71%	71%	71%	71%	71%
Hale Street	8	100%	100%	100%	88%	63%
Highland Street	3	100%	67%	67%	67%	67%
Holbrook Court	6	100%	67%	83%	100%	100%
<i>On Street Parking Total Spaces:</i>	315					
<i>Off Street Parking</i>						
Rockport National Bank Lot	17	53%	53%	29%	82%	100%
Peg Leg Inn Lot	61	87%	66%	51%	44%	15%
Town Office Lot	18	89%	78%	94%	100%	78%
Town Office Lot	59	86%	68%	73%	90%	85%
<i>Off Street Parking Total Spaces</i>	155					
TOTAL	470	90%	81%	82%	87%	80%
Available Spaces						
<i>On Street Parking Total Available Spaces:</i>		15	25	20	14	34
<i>Off Street Parking Total Available Spaces:</i>		26	52	59	43	65
Total Available Spaces:		41	77	79	57	99

Source: Earth Tech, Inc.